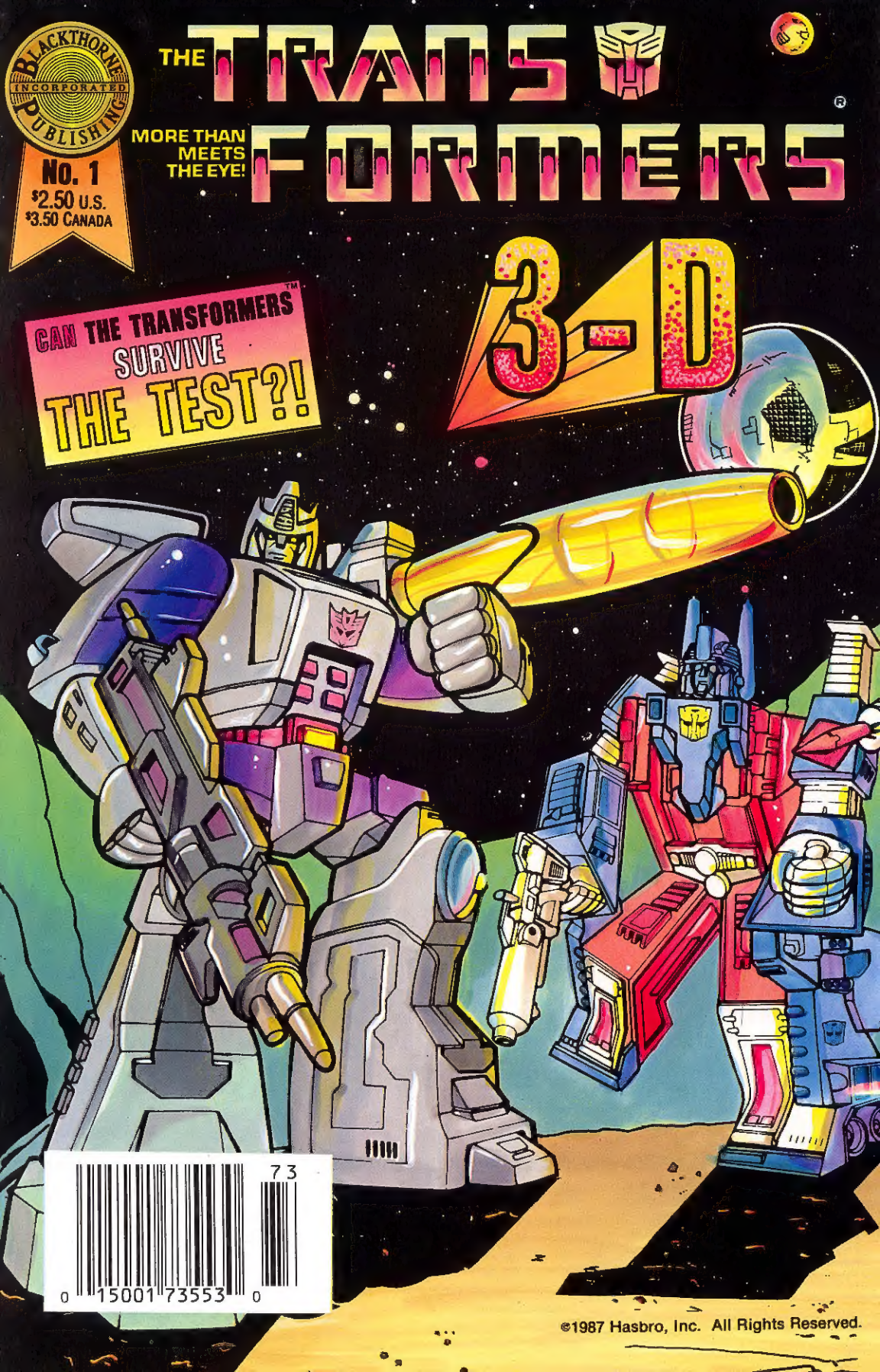
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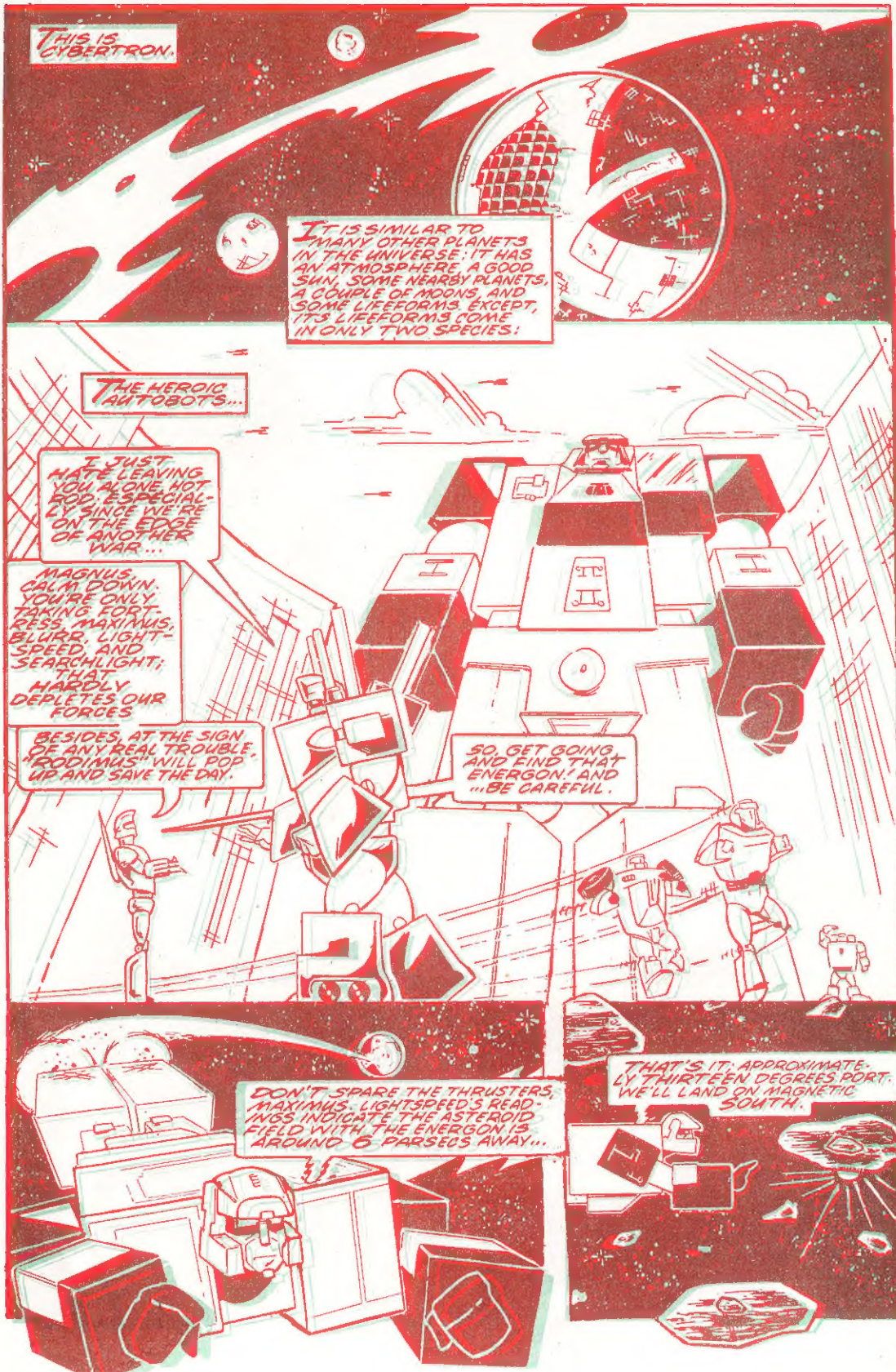
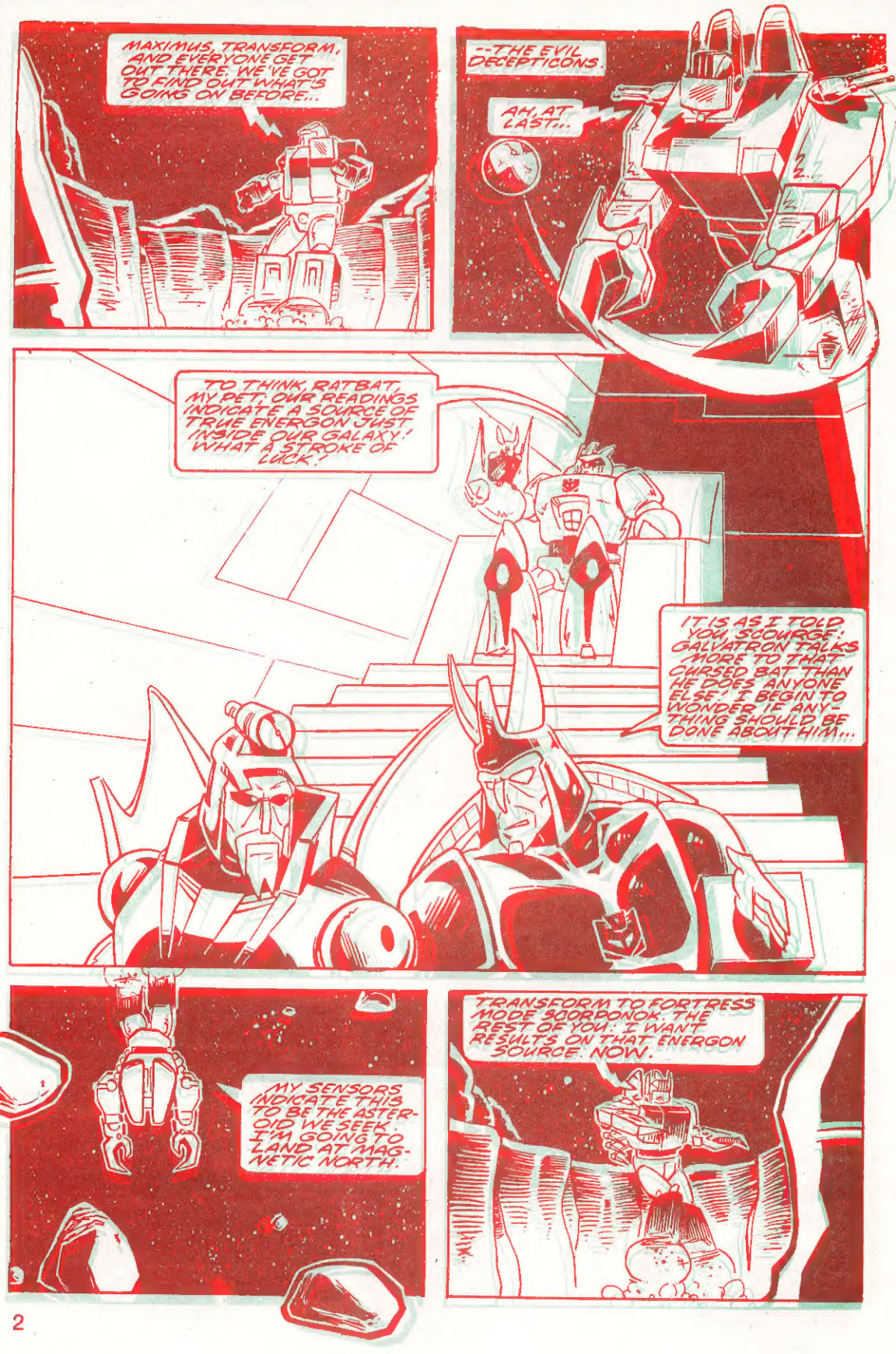
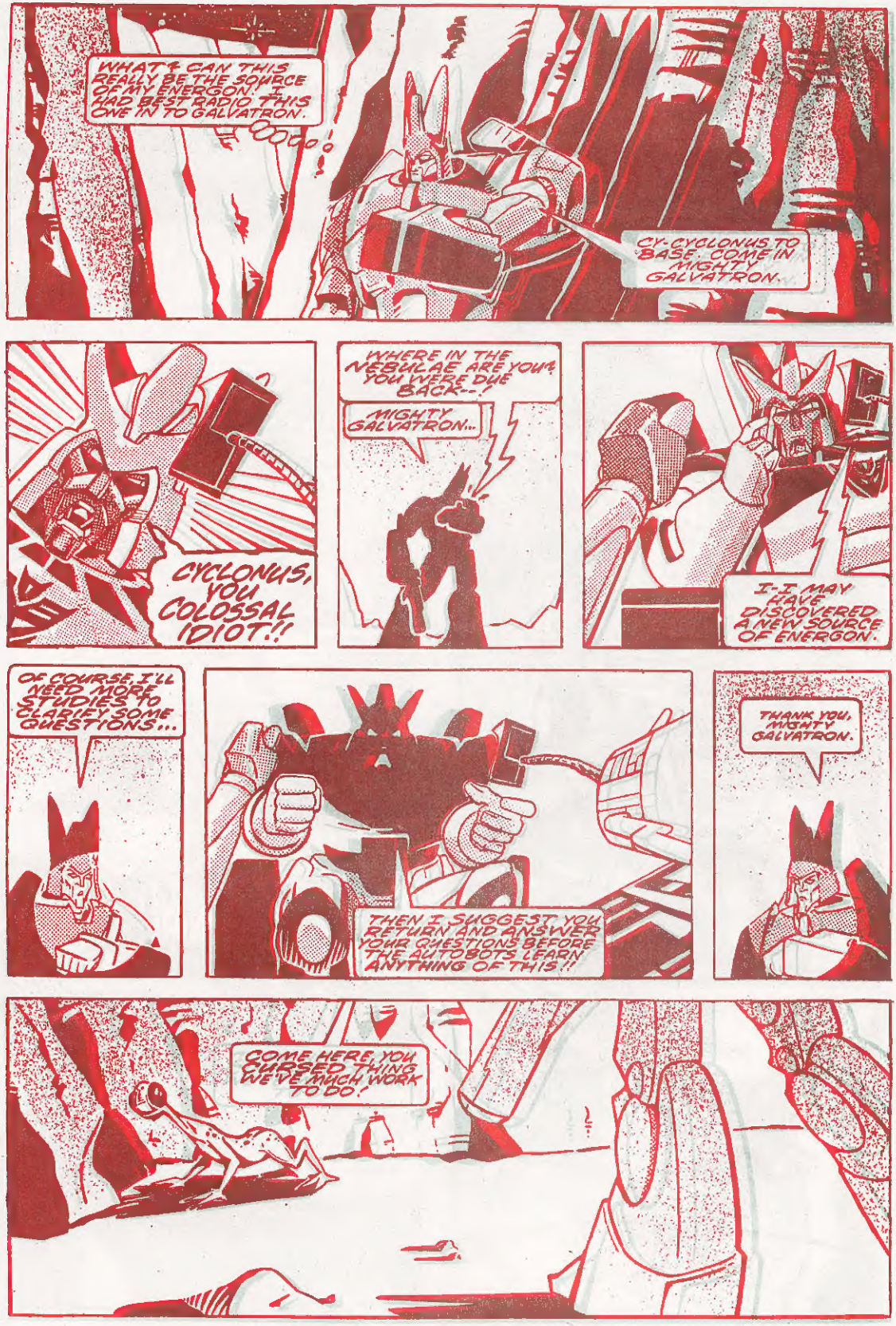
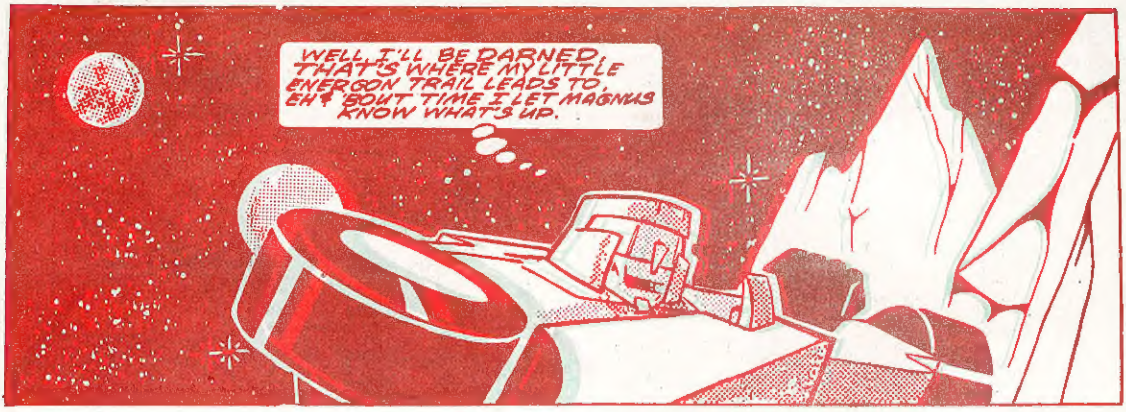

THIS IS CYBERTRON.
IT IS SIMILAR TO MANY OTHER PLANETS IN THE UNIVERSE: IT HAS AN ATMOSPHERE, A GOOD SUN, SOME NEARBY PLANETS, A COUPLE OF MOONS, AND SOME LIFEFORMS. EXCEPT, ITS LIFEFORMS COME IN ONLY TWO SPECIES:
THE HEROIC AUTOBOTS...
I JUST HATE LEAVING YOU ALONE, HOT ROD, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE'RE ON THE EDGE OF ANOTHER WAR...
MAGNUS, CALM DOWN. YOU'RE ONLY TAKING FORTRESS MAXIMUS, BLURR, LIGHTSPEED, AND SEARCHLIGHT; THAT HARDLY DEPLETES OUR FORCES
BESIDES, AT THE SIGN OF ANY REAL TROUBLE, "RODIMUS" WILL POP UP AND SAVE THE DAY.
SO, GET GOING AND FIND THAT ENERGON! AND ...BE CAREFUL.
DON'T SPARE THE THRUSTERS, MAXIMUS. LIGHTSPEED'S READINGS INDICATE THE ASTEROID FIELD WITH THE ENERGON IS AROUND 6 PARSECS AWAY...
THAT'S IT. APPROXIMATELY THIRTEEN DEGREES PORT. WE'LL LAND ON MAGNETIC SOUTH.


MAXIMUS, TRANSFORM, AND EVERYONE GET OUT THERE. WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON BEFORE...
--THE EVIL DECEPTICONS.
AH, AT LAST...
TO THINK, RATBAT, MY PET, OUR READINGS INDICATE A SOURCE OF TRUE ENERGON JUST INSIDE OUR GALAXY! WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK!
IT IS AS I TOLD YOU, SCOURGE: GALVATRON TALKS MORE TO THAT CURSED BAT THAN HE DOES ANYONE ELSE. I BEGIN TO WONDER IF ANY-THING SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT HIM...
MY SENSORS INDICATE THIS TO BE THE ASTER-OID WE SEEK. I'M GOING TO LAND AT MAG-NETIC NORTH.
TRANSFORM TO FORTRESS MODE SOORDONOK. THE REST OF YOU: I WANT RESULTS ON THAT ENERGON SOURCE. NOW.

THE TEST
IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CYBERTONIAN GALAXY ON A SUPPOSEDLY LIFELESS ASTEROID...
ODD. THE ENERGON READINGS LEAD IN A TRAIL AND STOP BEHIND THAT ROCK...
AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT SAME ASTEROID...
CURSED ENERGON! THIS TRAIL HAS LED US SECTORS OUT OF OUR WAY! GALVATRON WILL SURELY HAVE MY HEAD!

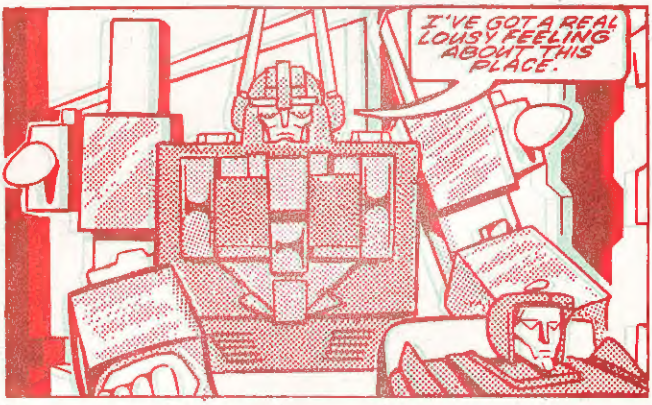

WHAT? CAN THIS REALLY BE THE SOURCE OF MY ENERGON. I HAD BEST RADIO THIS ONE IN TO GALVATRON.
CY-CYCLONUS TO BASE. COME IN MIGHTY GALVATRON.
CYCLONUS, YOU COLOSSAL IDIOT!!
WHERE IN THE NEBULAE ARE YOU? YOU WERE DUE BACK--!
MIGHTY GALVATRON..
I-I MAY HAVE DISCOVERED A NEW SOURCE OF ENERGON.
OF COURSE I'LL NEED MORE STUDIES TO CLARIFY SOME QUESTIONS...
THEN I SUGGEST YOU RETURN AND ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS BEFORE THE AUTOBOTS LEARN ANYTHING OF THIS!!
THANK YOU, MIGHTY GALVATRON.
COME HERE YOU CURSED THING WE'VE MUCH WORK TO DO!

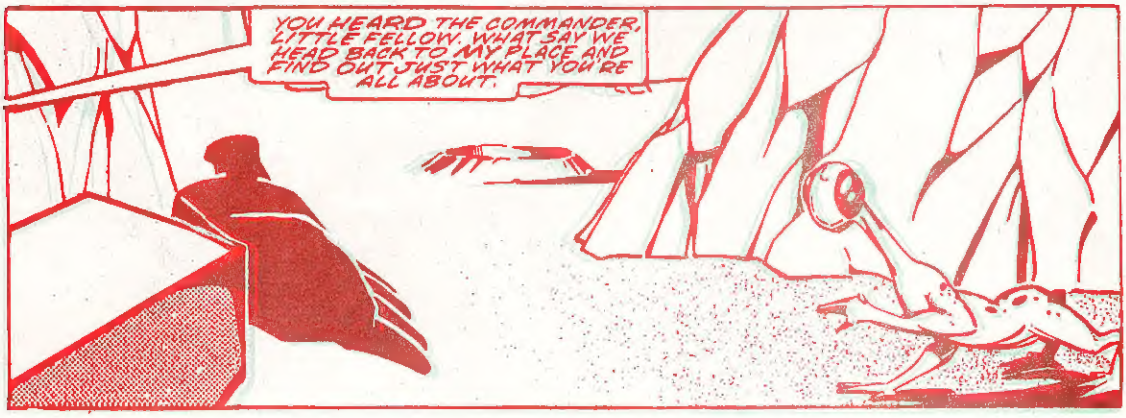

WELL I'LL BE DARNED. THAT'S WHERE MY LITTLE ENERGON TRAIL LEADS TO. EH? 'BOUT TIME I LET MAGNUS KNOW WHAT'S UP.

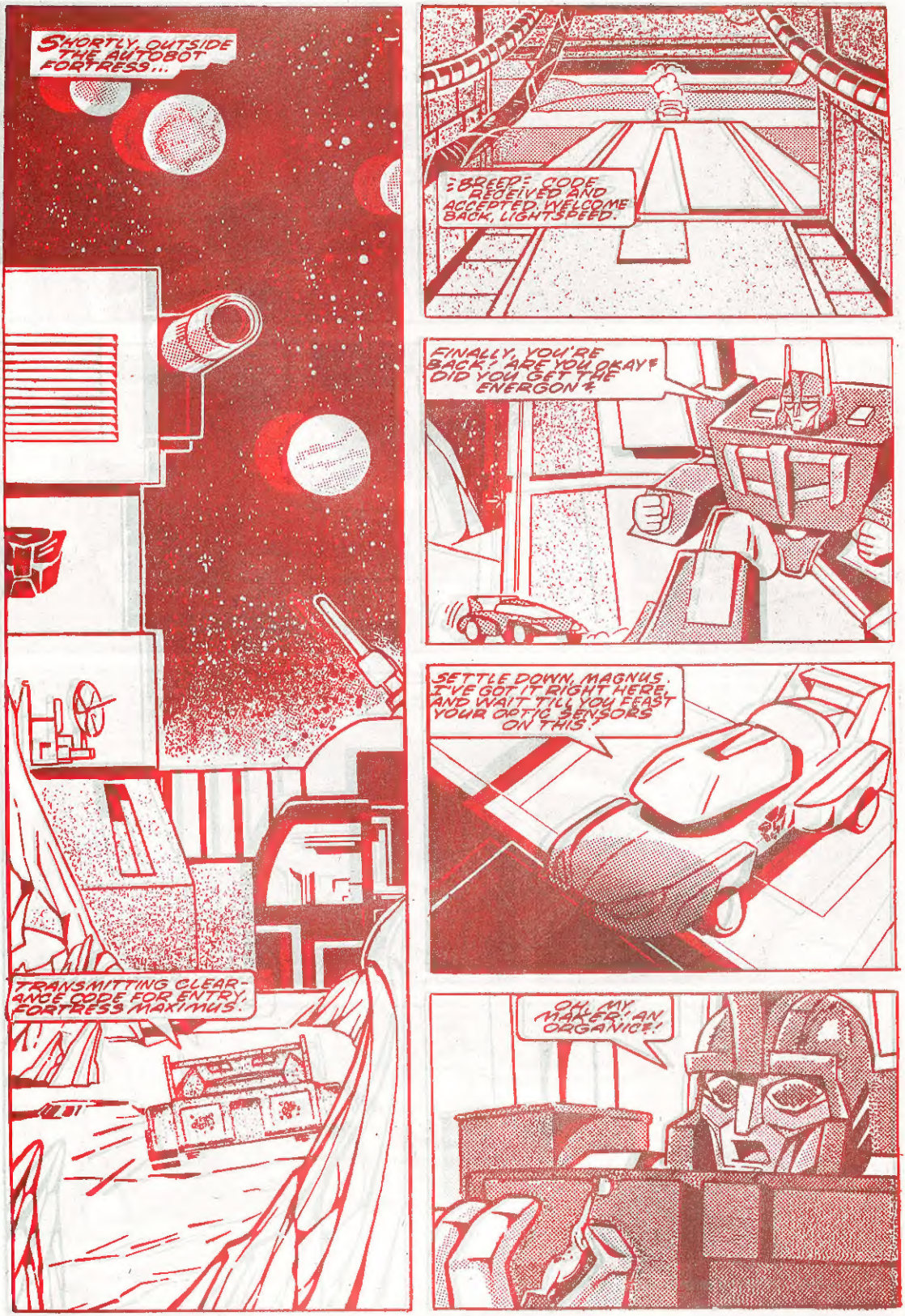
ULTRA MAGNUS! ULTRA MAGNUS! I'M RECEIVING TRANSMISSION FROM LIGHTSPEED!!

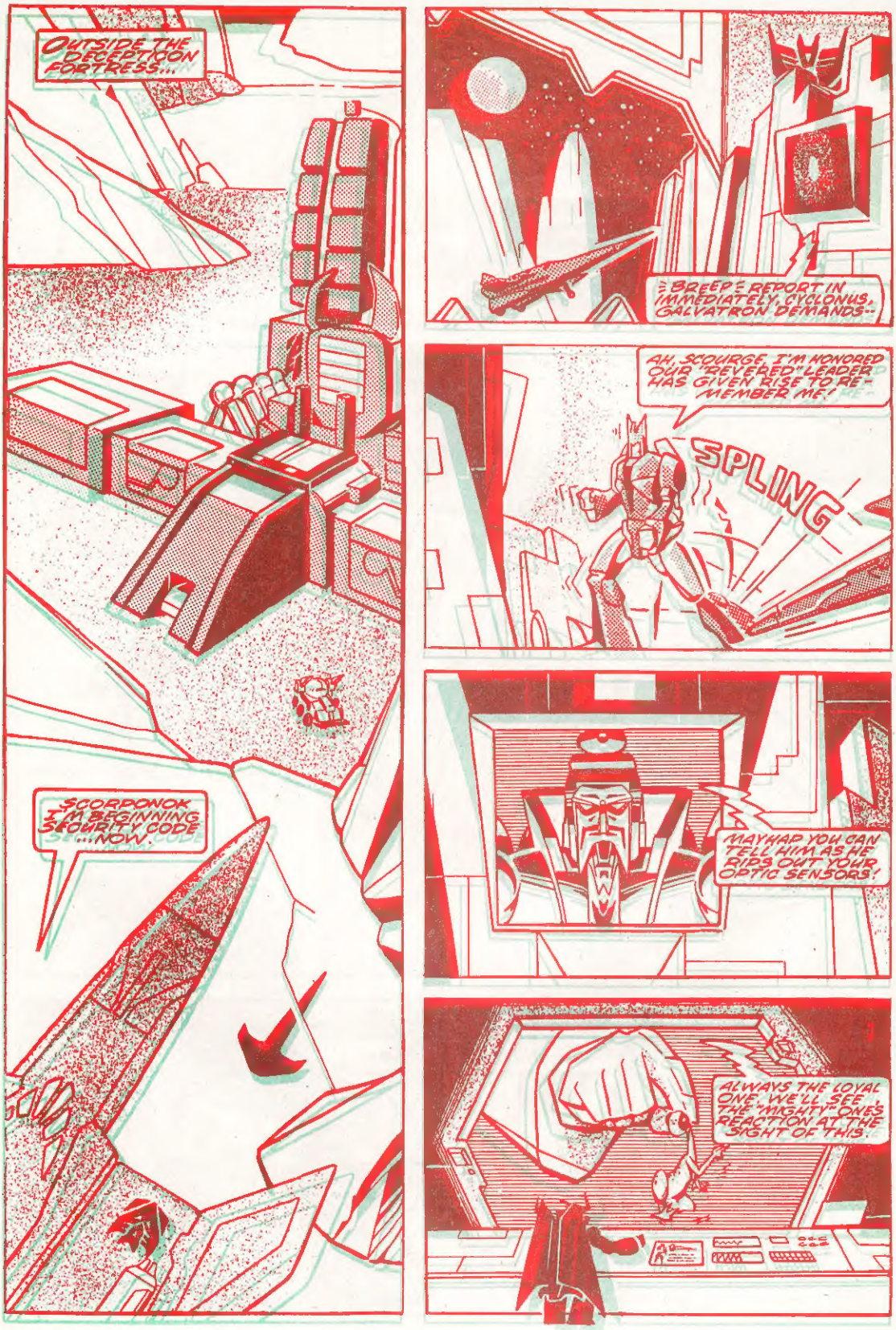
THANK THE MATRIX! LIGHTSPEED. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

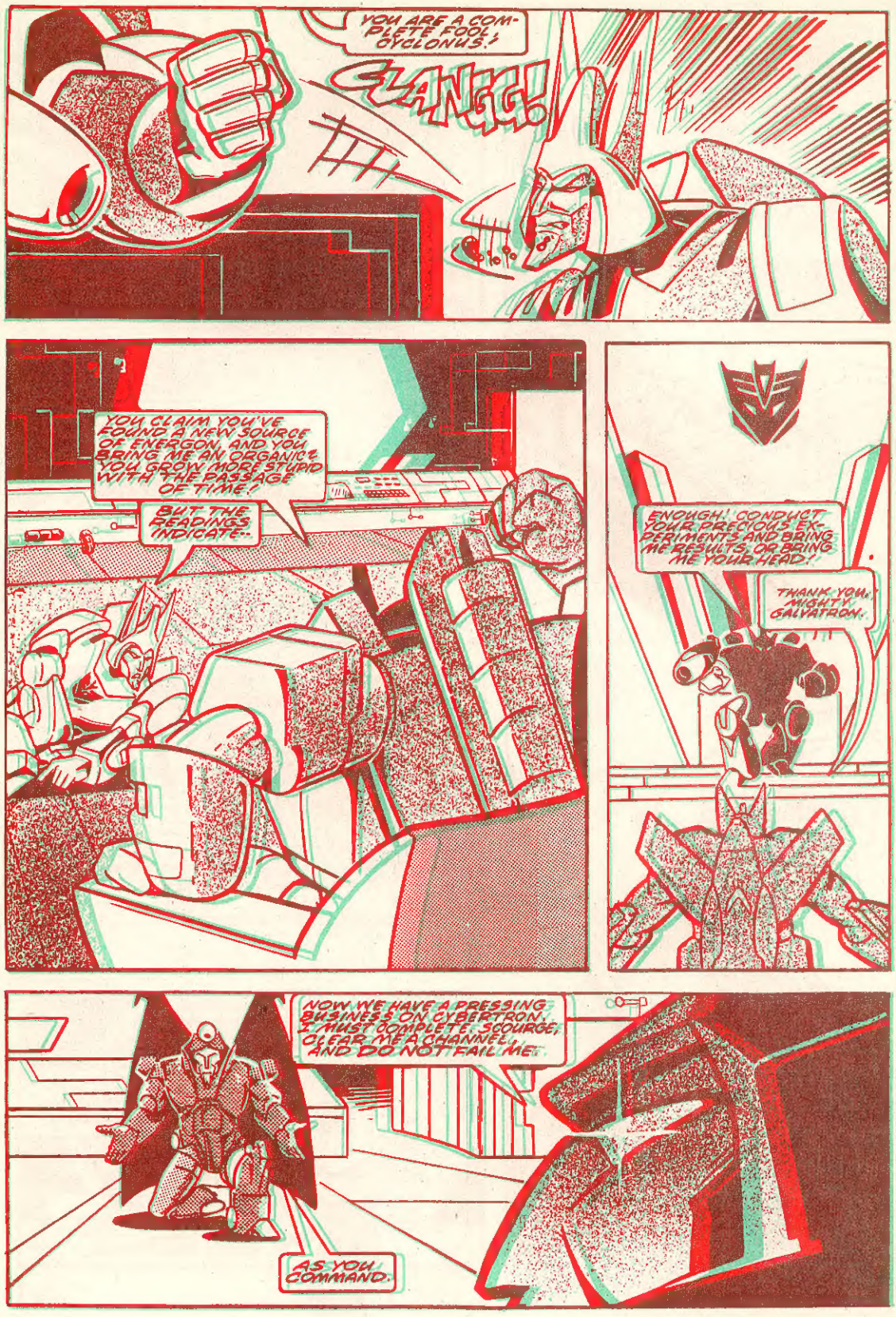
NOT TO WORRY MAGNUS; I'M FINE AND I THINK I MAY HAVE DISCOVERED THE SOURCE OF THAT ENERGON TRAIL.
WELL GRAB IT AND HURRY BACK...

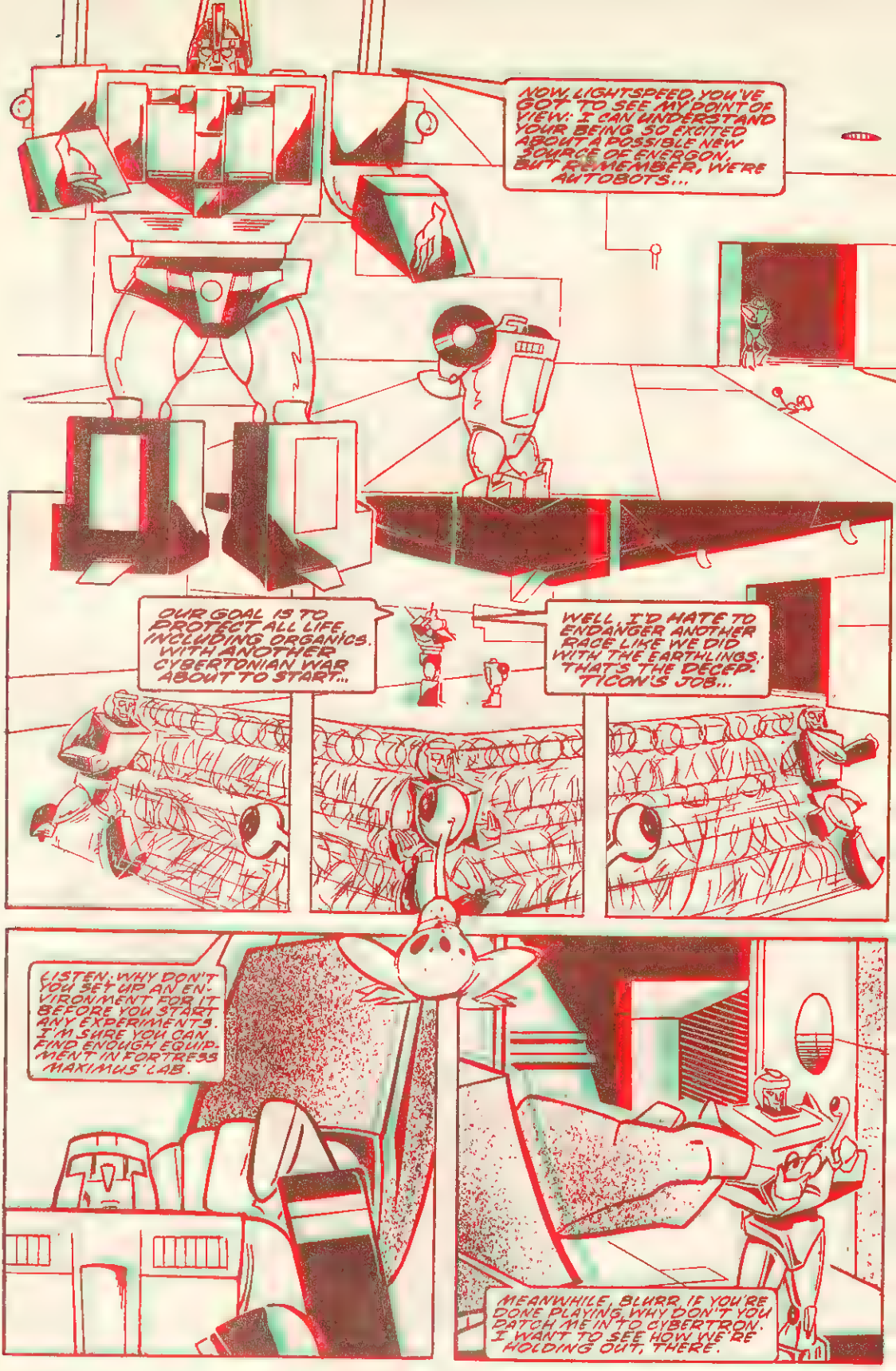

I'VE GOT A REAL LOUSY FEELING ABOUT THIS PLACE.

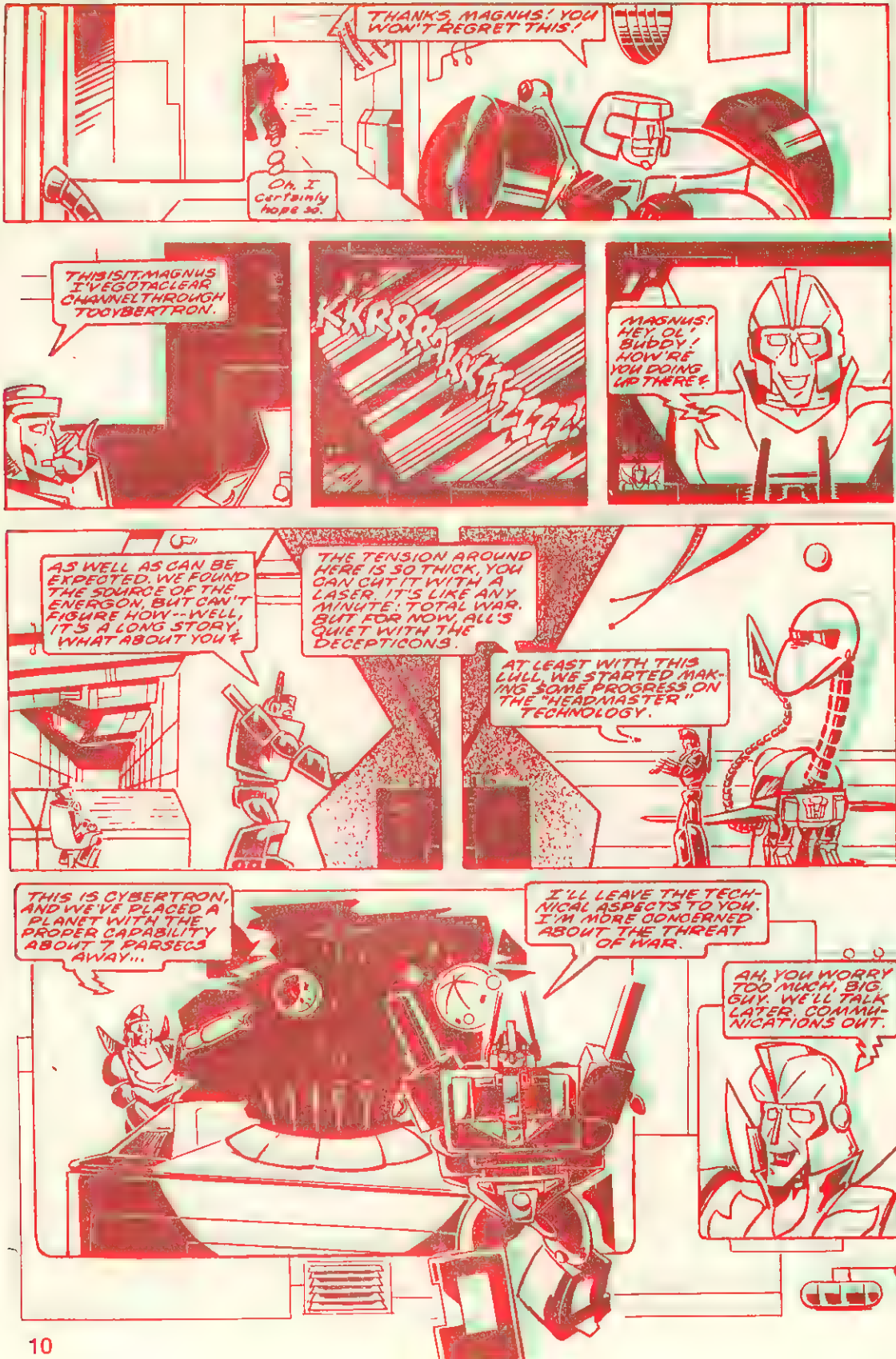

YOU HEARD THE COMMANDER, LITTLE FELLOW. WHAT SAY WE HEAD BACK TO MY PLACE AND FIND OUT JUST WHAT YOU'RE ALL ABOUT.

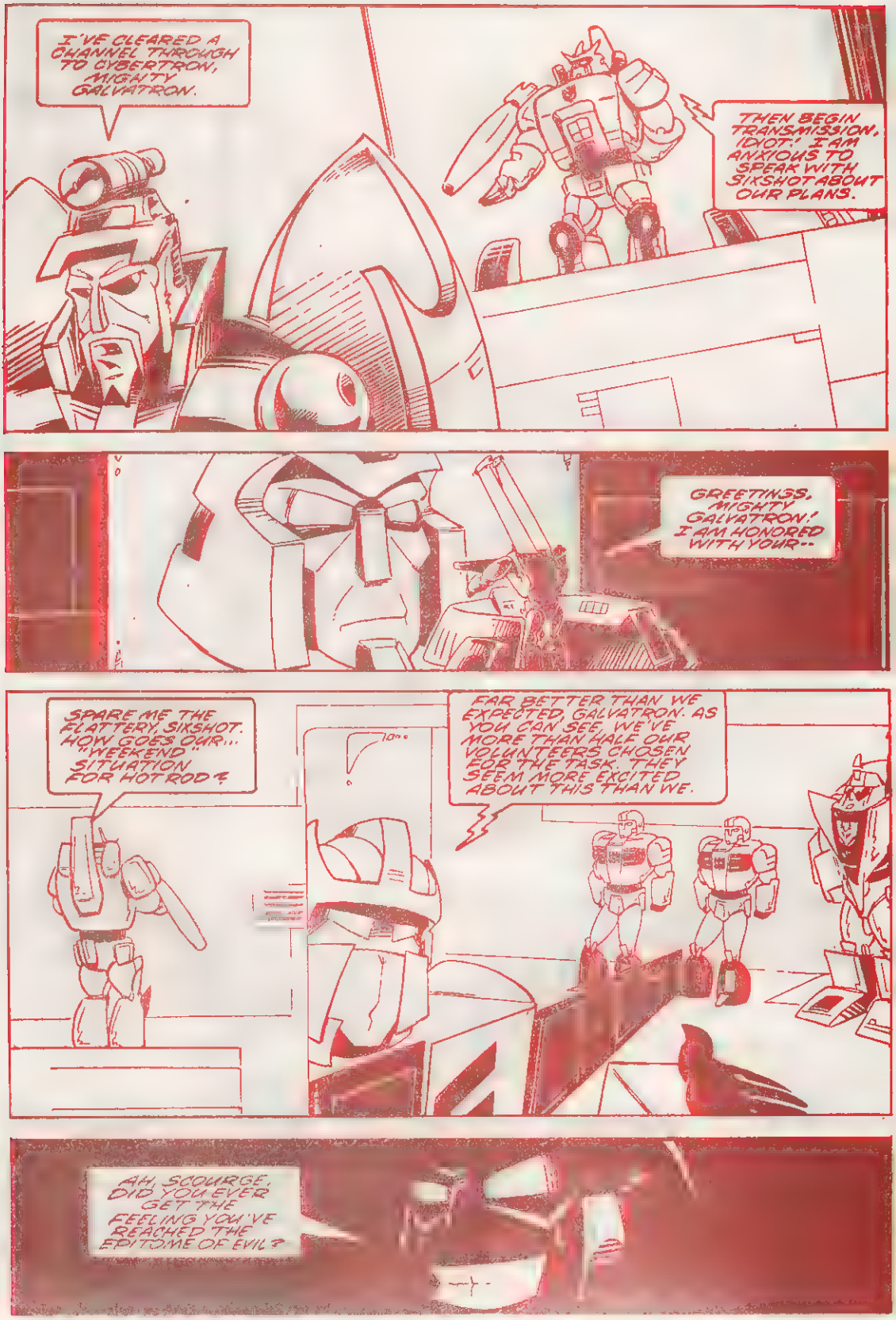

SHORTLY OUTSIDE THE AUTOBOT FORTRESS...
TRANSMITTING CLEARANCE CODE FOR ENTRY, FORTRESS MAXIMUS.
:BEEP: CODE RECEIVED AND ACCEPTED. WELCOME BACK, LIGHTSPEED.
FINALLY, YOU'RE BACK. ARE YOU OKAY? DID YOU GET THE ENERGON?
SETTLE DOWN, MAGNUS. I'VE GOT IT RIGHT HERE, AND WAIT TILL YOU FEAST YOUR OPTIC SENSORS ON THIS!
OH, MY MAKER! AN ORGANIC?!

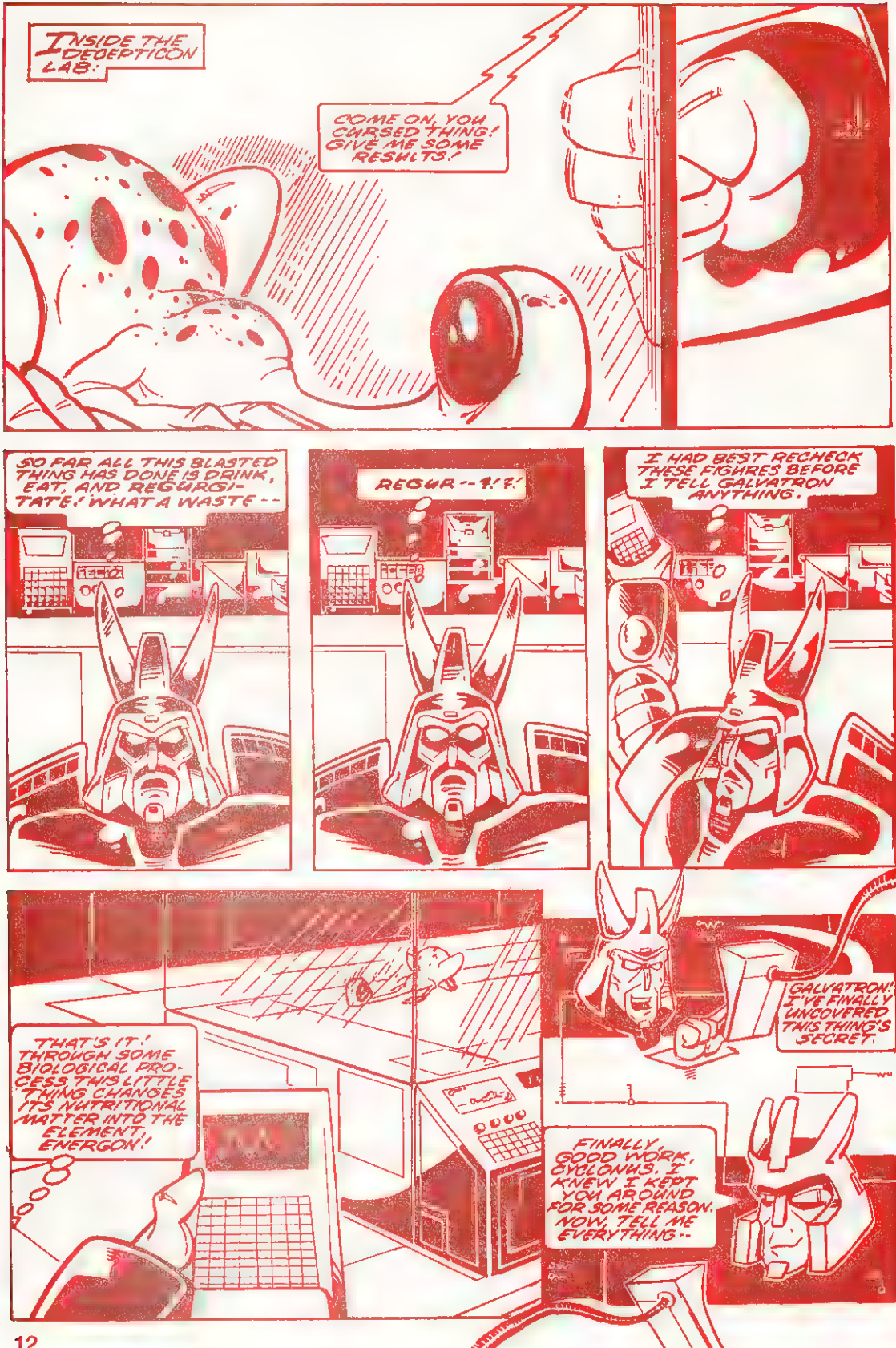

OUTSIDE THE DECEPTICON FORTRESS...
SCORPONOK I AM BEGINNING SECURITY CODE ...NOW.
=BREEP= REPORT IN IMMEDIATELY, CYCLONUS, GALVATRON DEMANDS..
AH, SCOURGE, I'M HONORED OUR "REVERED" LEADER HAS GIVEN RISE TO REMEMBER ME!
SPLING
MAYHAP YOU CAN TELL HIM AS HE RIPS OUT YOUR OPTIC SENSORS!
ALWAYS THE LOYAL ONE. WE'LL SEE THE "MIGHTY" ONE'S REACTION AT THE SIGHT OF THIS.

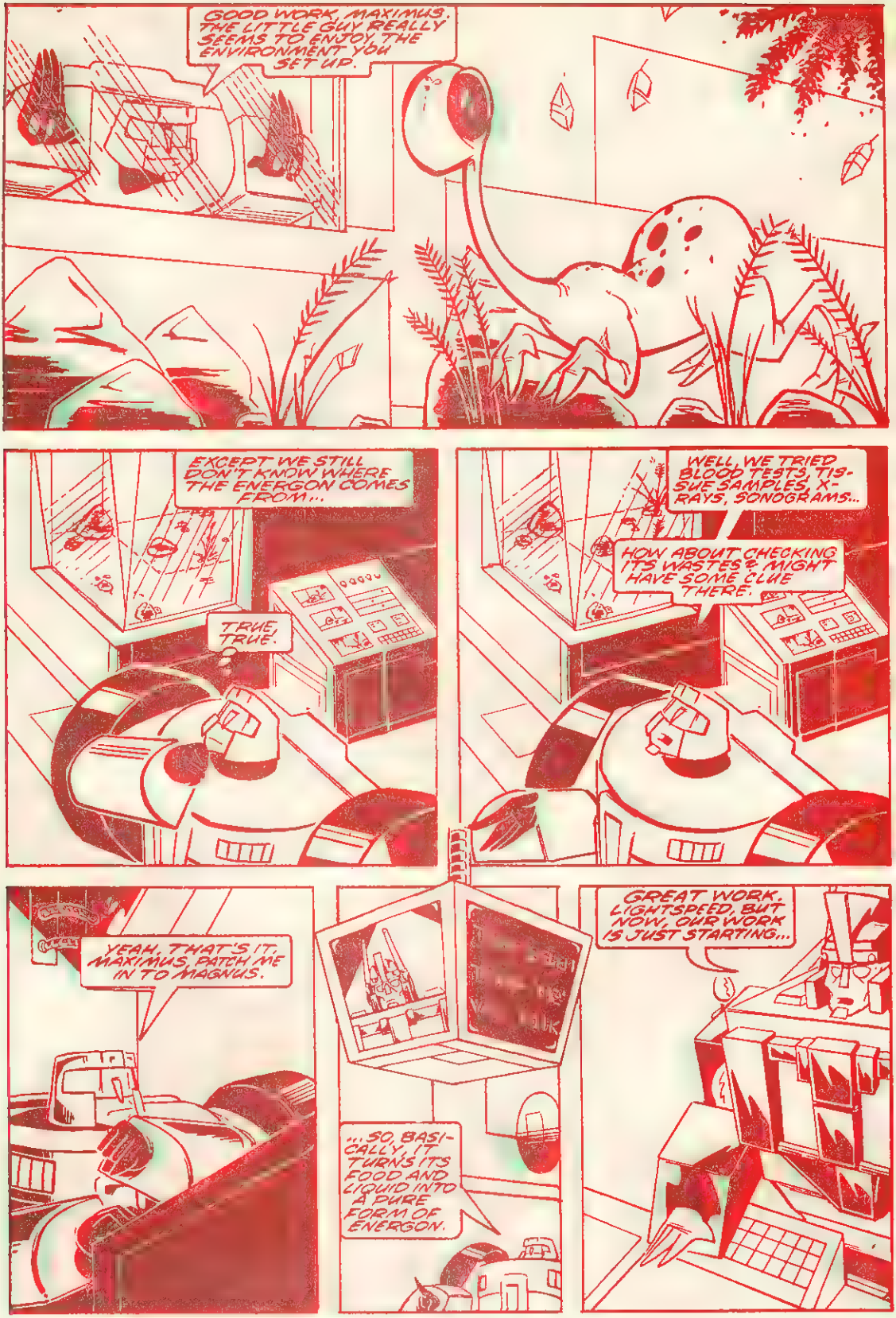

YOU ARE A COMPLETE FOOL, CYCLONUS!
CLANGG!
YOU CLAIM YOU'VE FOUND A NEW SOURCE OF ENERGON, AND YOU BRING ME AN ORGANIC? YOU GROW MORE STUPID WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME!
BUT THE READINGS INDICATE..
ENOUGH! CONDUCT YOUR PRECIOUS EXPERIMENTS AND BRING ME RESULTS, OR BRING ME YOUR HEAD!
THANK YOU, MIGHTY GALVATRON.
NOW WE HAVE A PRESSING BUSINESS ON CYBERTRON. I MUST COMPLETE SCOURGE, CLEAR ME A CHANNEL, AND DO NOT FAIL ME.
AS YOU COMMAND.

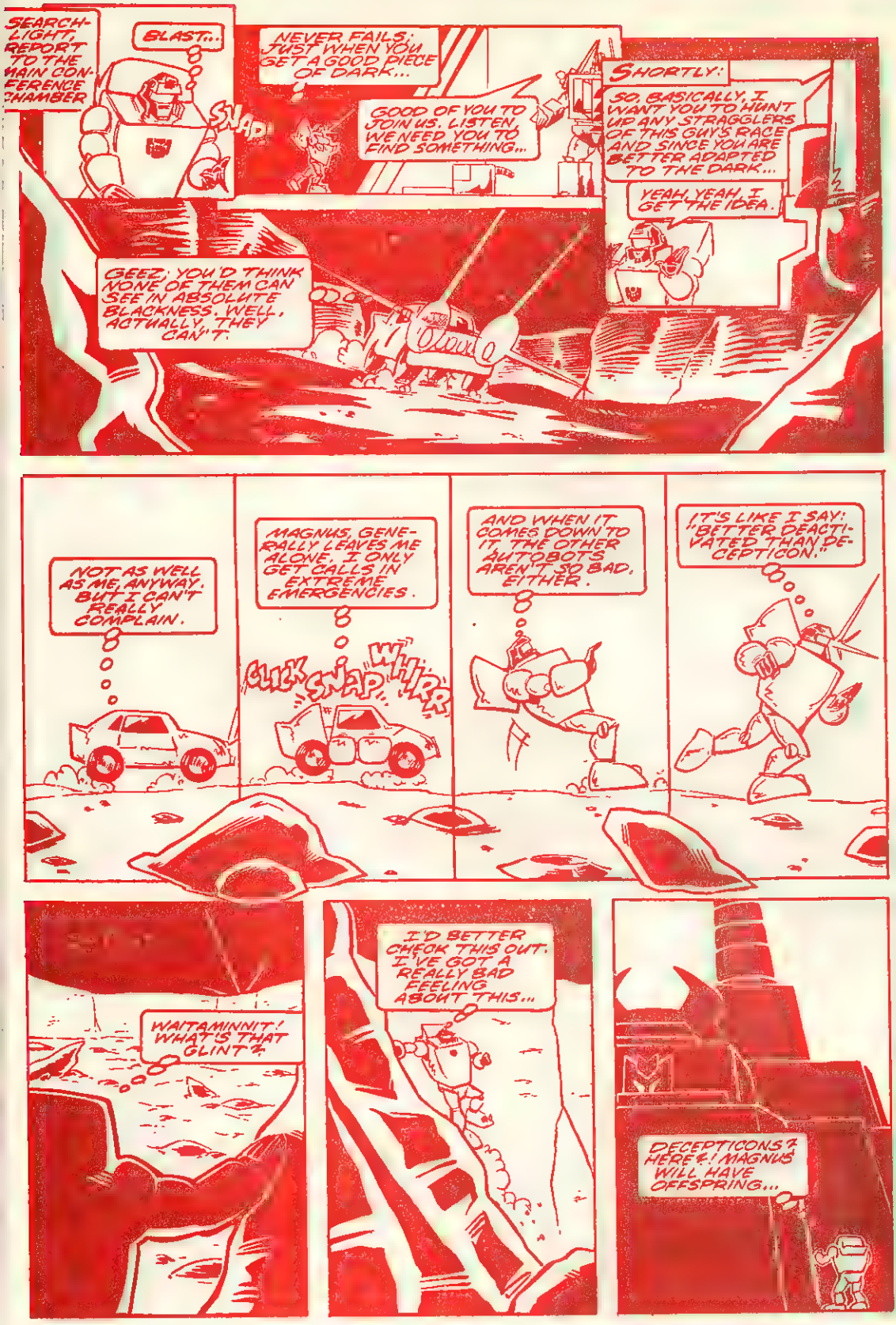

NOW, LIGHTSPEED, YOU'VE GOT TO SEE MY POINT OF VIEW. I CAN UNDERSTAND YOUR BEING SO EXCITED ABOUT A POSSIBLE NEW SOURCE OF ENERGON. BUT REMEMBER, WE'RE AUTOBOTS...
OUR GOAL IS TO PROTECT ALL LIFE, INCLUDING ORGANICS. WITH ANOTHER CYBERTONIAN WAR ABOUT TO START...
WELL, I'D HATE TO ENDANGER ANOTHER RACE LIKE WE DID WITH THE EARTHLINGS. THAT'S THE DECEPTICON'S JOB...
LISTEN. WHY DON'T YOU SET UP AN ENVIRONMENT FOR IT BEFORE YOU START ANY EXPERIMENTS. I'M SURE YOU CAN FIND ENOUGH EQUIPMENT IN FORTRESS MAXIMUS' LAB.
MEANWHILE, BLURR, IF YOU'RE DONE PLAYING, WHY DON'T YOU PATCH ME IN TO CYBERTRON. I WANT TO SEE HOW WE'RE HOLDING OUT, THERE.

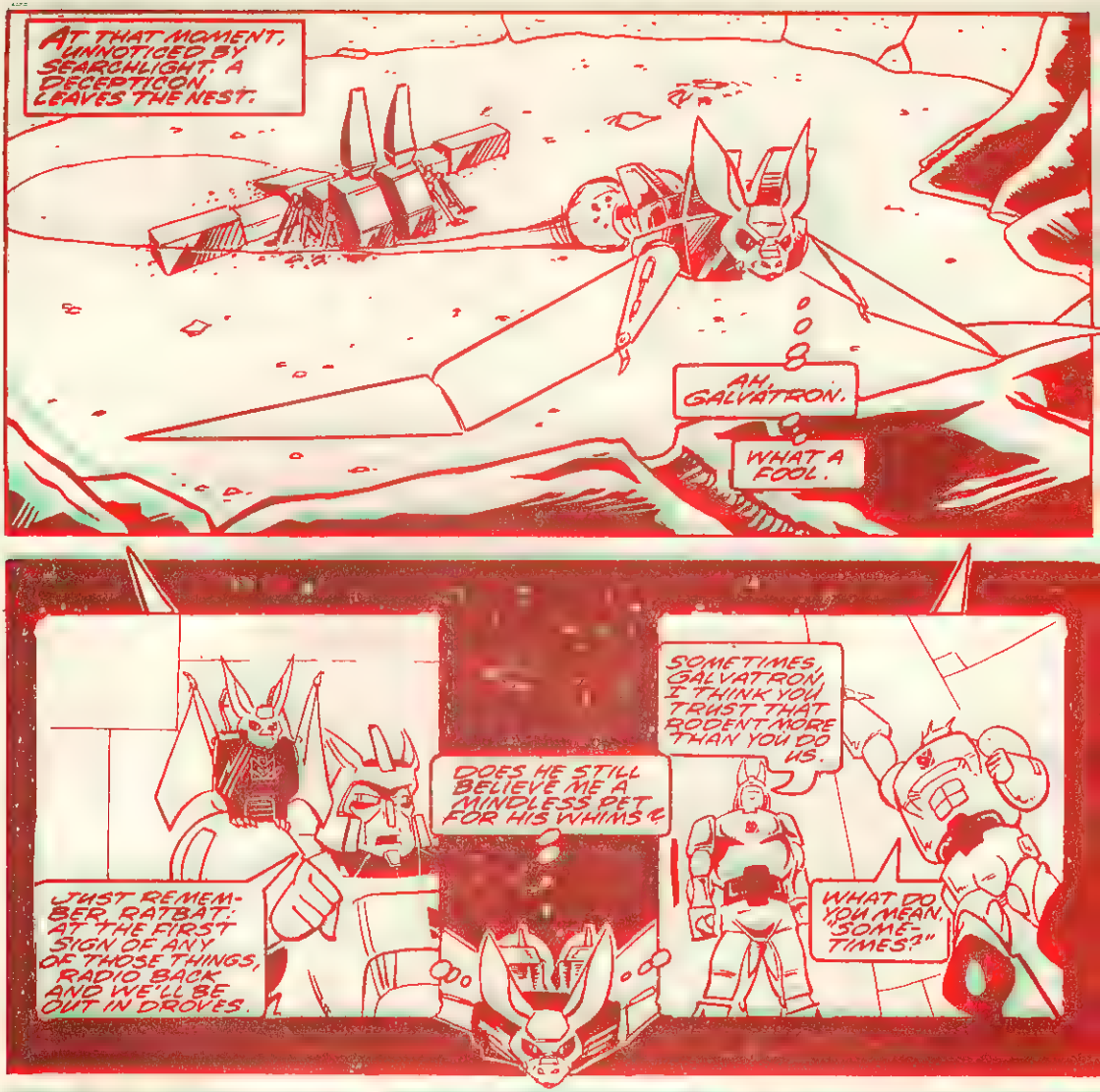

THANKS, MAGNUS! YOU WON'T REGRET THIS!
Oh, I certainly hope so.
THIS IS IT, MAGNUS I'VE GOT A CLEAR CHANNEL THROUGH TOOYBERTRON.
KKRRRAKSHZZZ!
MAGNUS! HEY OL' BUDDY! HOW'RE YOU DOING UP THERE?
AS WELL AS CAN BE EXPECTED. WE FOUND THE SOURCE OF THE ENERGON, BUT CAN'T FIGURE HOW -- WELL, IT'S A LONG STORY. WHAT ABOUT YOU?
THE TENSION AROUND HERE IS SO THICK, YOU CAN CUT IT WITH A LASER. IT'S LIKE ANY MINUTE: TOTAL WAR. BUT FOR NOW, ALL'S QUIET WITH THE DECEPTICONS.
AT LEAST WITH THIS LULL, WE STARTED MAKING SOME PROGRESS ON THE "HEADMASTER" TECHNOLOGY.
THIS IS CYBERTRON, AND WE'VE PLACED A PLANET WITH THE PROPER CAPABILITY ABOUT 7 PARSECS AWAY...
I'LL LEAVE THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS TO YOU. I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE THREAT OF WAR.
AH, YOU WORRY TOO MUCH, BIG GUY. WE'LL TALK LATER. COMMUNICATIONS OUT.

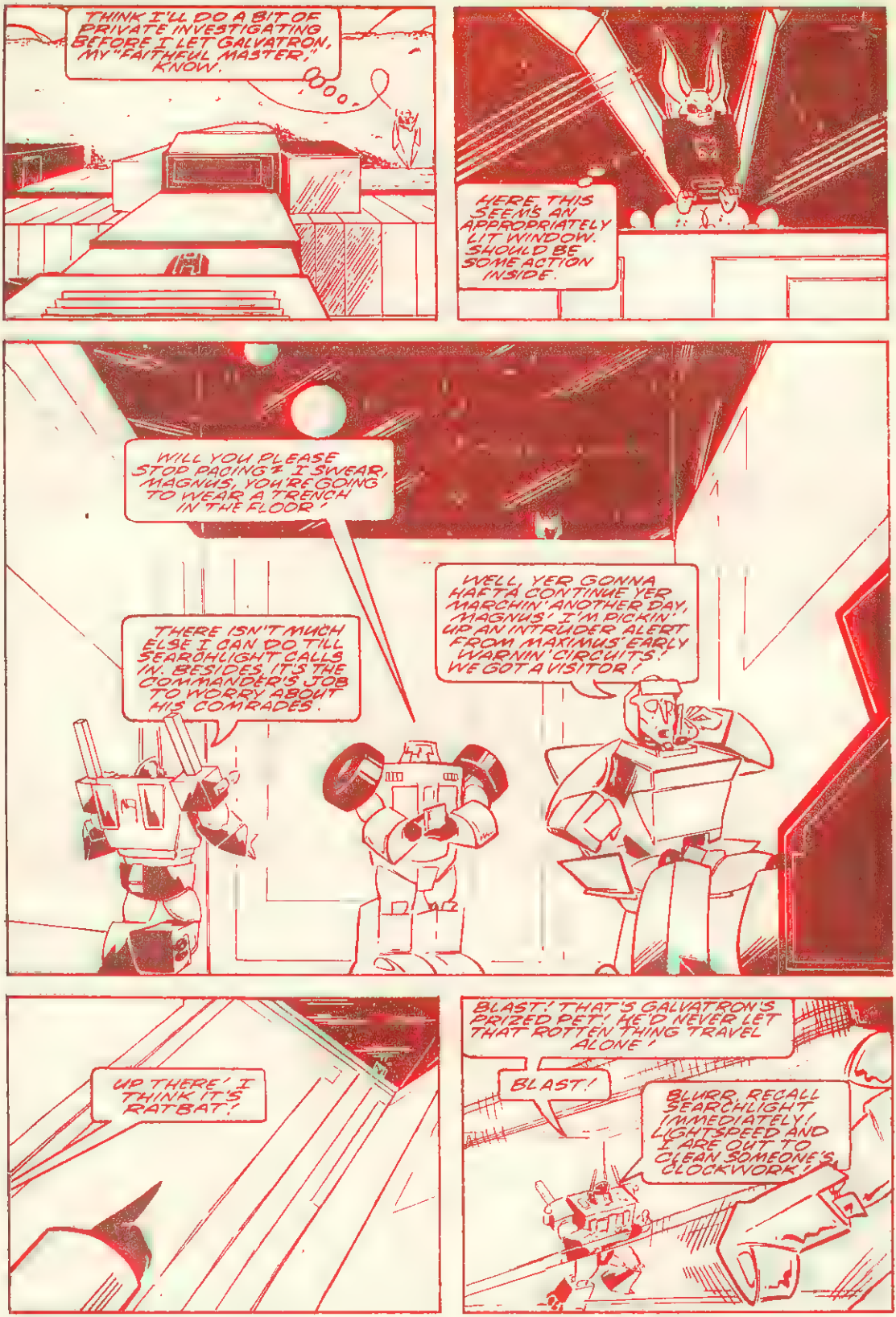

I'VE CLEARED A CHANNEL THROUGH TO CYBERTRON, MIGHTY GALVATRON.
THEN BEGIN TRANSMISSION, IDIOT. I AM ANXIOUS TO SPEAK WITH SIXSHOT ABOUT OUR PLANS.
GREETINGS, MIGHTY GALVATRON. I AM HONORED WITH YOUR--
SPARE ME THE FLATTERY, SIXSHOT. HOW GOES OUR... "WEEKEND" SITUATION FOR HOTROD?
FAR BETTER THAN WE EXPECTED, GALVATRON. AS YOU CAN SEE, WE'VE MORE THAN HALF OUR VOLUNTEERS CHOSEN FOR THE TASK. THEY SEEM MORE EXCITED ABOUT THIS THAN WE.
AH, SCOURGE, DID YOU EVER GET THE FEELING YOU'VE REACHED THE EPITOME OF EVIL?

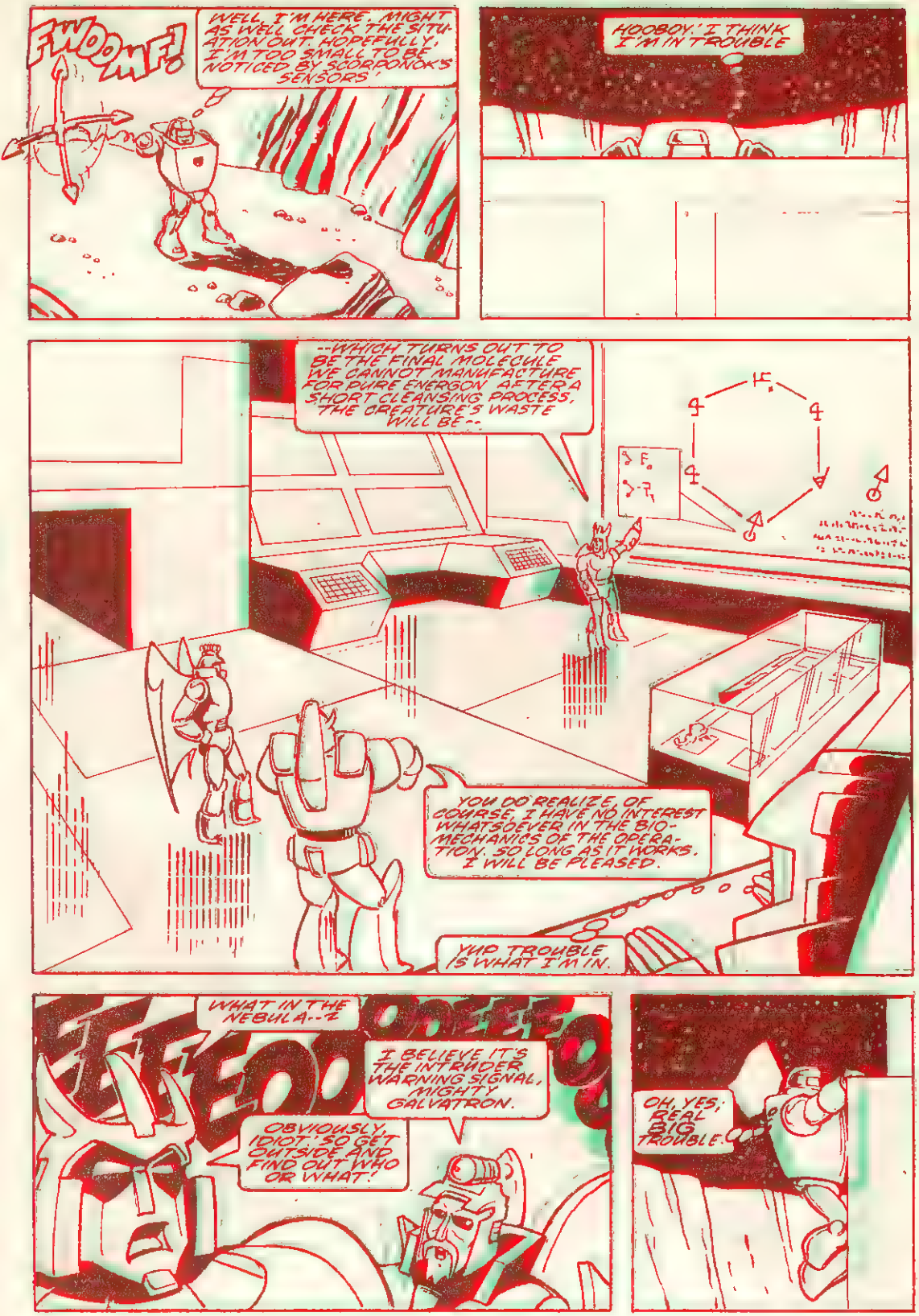

INSIDE THE DECEPTICON LAB:
COME ON, YOU CURSED THING! GIVE ME SOME RESULTS!
SO FAR ALL THIS BLASTED THING HAS DONE IS DRINK, EAT, AND REGURGITATE! WHAT A WASTE--
REGUR--?!?
I HAD BEST RECHECK THESE FIGURES BEFORE I TELL GALVATRON ANYTHING.
THAT'S IT! THROUGH SOME BIOLOGICAL PROCESS THIS LITTLE THING CHANGES ITS NUTRITIONAL MATTER INTO THE ELEMENT ENERGON!
GALVATRON! I'VE FINALLY UNCOVERED THIS THING'S SECRET.
FINALLY. GOOD WORK, CYCLONUS. I KNEW I KEPT YOU AROUND FOR SOME REASON. NOW, TELL ME EVERYTHING--


GOOD WORK, MAXIMUS. THE LITTLE GUY REALLY SEEMS TO ENJOY THE ENVIRONMENT YOU SET UP.
EXCEPT WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE THE ENERGON COMES FROM...
TRUE, TRUE.
WELL, WE TRIED BLOOD TESTS, TISSUE SAMPLES, X-RAYS, SONOGRAMS...
HOW ABOUT CHECKING ITS WASTES? MIGHT HAVE SOME CLUE THERE.
YEAH, THAT'S IT, MAXIMUS. PATCH ME IN TO MAGNUS.
...SO, BASICALLY, IT TURNS ITS FOOD AND LIQUID INTO A PURE FORM OF ENERGON.
GREAT WORK, LIGHTSPEED, BUT NOW, OUR WORK IS JUST STARTING...


SEARCH-LIGHT, REPORT TO THE MAIN CONFERENCE CHAMBER
BLAST...
SNAP
NEVER FAILS. JUST WHEN YOU GET A GOOD PIECE OF DARK...
GOOD OF YOU TO JOIN US. LISTEN, WE NEED YOU TO FIND SOMETHING...
SHORTLY:
SO, BASICALLY, I WANT YOU TO HUNT UP ANY STRAGGLERS OF THIS GUY'S RACE AND SINCE YOU ARE BETTER ADAPTED TO THE DARK...
YEAH, YEAH, I GET THE IDEA.
GEEZ. YOU'D THINK NONE OF THEM CAN SEE IN ABSOLUTE BLACKNESS. WELL, ACTUALLY, THEY CAN'T.
NOT AS WELL AS ME, ANYWAY. BUT I CAN'T REALLY COMPLAIN.
MAGNUS GENERALLY LEAVES ME ALONE. I ONLY GET CALLS IN EXTREME EMERGENCIES.
CLICK
SNAP
WHIRR
AND WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, THE OTHER AUTOBOTS AREN'T SO BAD, EITHER.
IT'S LIKE I SAY: "BETTER DEACTIVATED THAN DECEPTICON."
WAITAMINNIT! WHAT'S THAT GLINT?
I'D BETTER CHECK THIS OUT. I'VE GOT A REALLY BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...
DECEPTICONS? HERE?! MAGNUS WILL HAVE OFFSPRING...

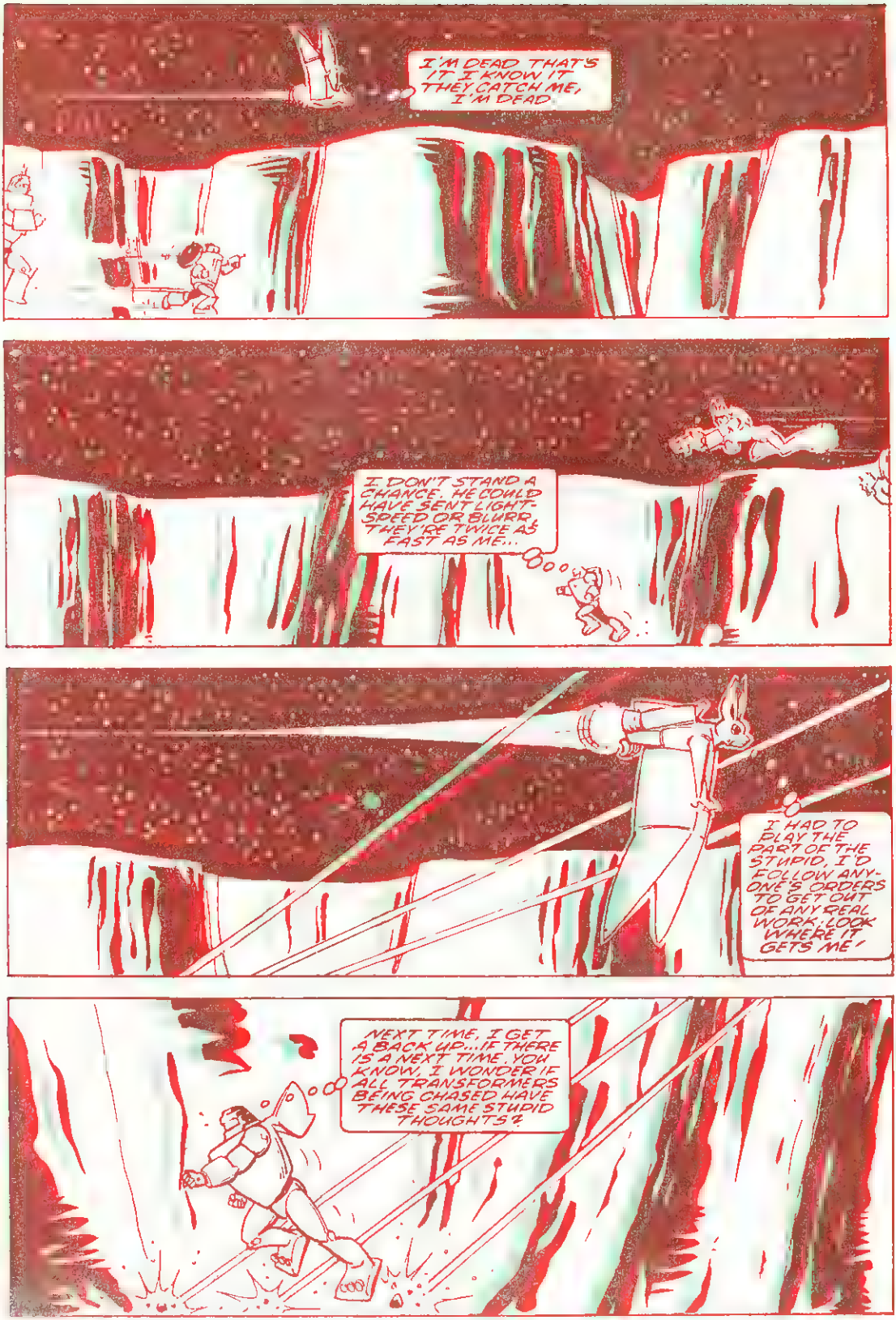

AT THAT MOMENT, UNNOTICED BY SEARCHLIGHT, A DECEPTICON LEAVES THE NEST.
AH, GALVATRON.
WHAT A FOOL.
JUST REMEMBER, RATBAT: AT THE FIRST SIGN OF ANY OF THOSE THINGS, RADIO BACK AND WE'LL BE OUT IN DROVES.
DOES HE STILL BELIEVE ME A MINDLESS PET FOR HIS WHIMS?
SOMETIMES, GALVATRON, I THINK YOU TRUST THAT RODENT MORE THAN YOU DO US.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SOMETIMES?"
SUCH AN EMBARRASSMENT BEING A--WAIT!
THAT SHINE DOESN'T SEEM ANY TOO NATURAL.
AUTOBOT?! THIS SOON?! BLAST!


THINK I'LL DO A BIT OF PRIVATE INVESTIGATING BEFORE I LET GALVATRON, MY "FAITHFUL MASTER," KNOW.
HERE THIS SEEMS AN APPROPRIATELY LIT WINDOW. SHOULD BE SOME ACTION INSIDE.
WILL YOU PLEASE STOP PACING? I SWEAR, MAGNUS, YOU'RE GOING TO WEAR A TRENCH IN THE FLOOR!
THERE ISN'T MUCH ELSE I CAN DO TILL SEARCHLIGHT CALLS IN. BESIDES, IT'S THE COMMANDER'S JOB TO WORRY ABOUT HIS COMRADES.
WELL, YER GONNA HAFTA CONTINUE YER MARCHIN' ANOTHER DAY, MAGNUS! I'M PICKIN' UP AN INTRUDER ALERT FROM MAXIMUS' EARLY WARNIN' CIRCUITS! WE GOT A VISITOR!
UP THERE! I THINK IT'S RATBAT!
BLAST! THAT'S GALVATRON'S PRIZED PET! HE'D NEVER LET THAT ROTTEN THING TRAVEL ALONE!
BLAST!
BLURR, RECALL SEARCHLIGHT IMMEDIATELY! LIGHTSPEED AND I ARE OUT TO CLEAN SOMEONE'S CLOCKWORK!

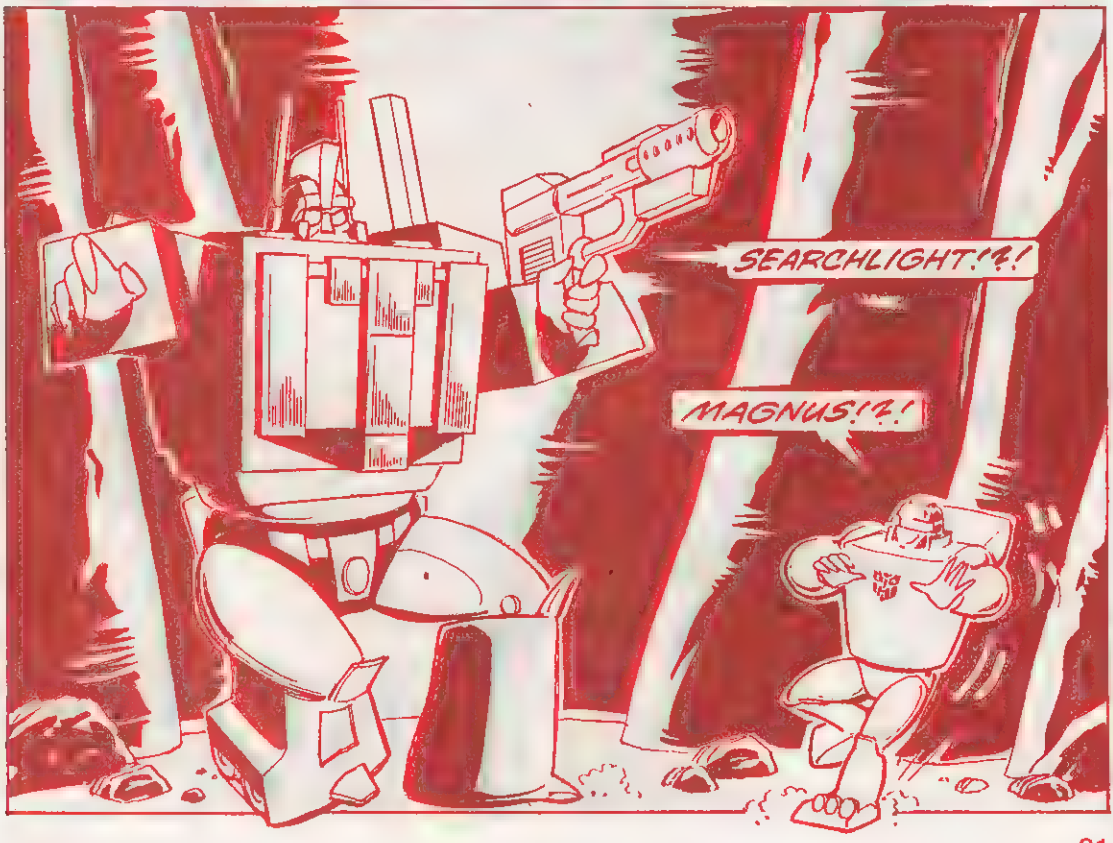

FWOOMF!
WELL, I'M HERE. MIGHT AS WELL CHECK THE SITUATION OUT. HOPEFULLY, I'M TOO SMALL TO BE NOTICED BY SCORPONOK'S SENSORS.
HOOBOY. I THINK I'M IN TROUBLE
--WHICH TURNS OUT TO BE THE FINAL MOLECULE WE CANNOT MANUFACTURE FOR PURE ENERGON. AFTER A SHORT CLEANSING PROCESS, THE CREATURE'S WASTE WILL BE--
YOU DO REALIZE, OF COURSE, I HAVE NO INTEREST WHATSOEVER IN THE BIO-MECHANICS OF THE OPERATION. SO LONG AS IT WORKS, I WILL BE PLEASED.
YUP. TROUBLE IS WHAT I'M IN.
WHAT IN THE NEBULA--?
I BELIEVE IT'S THE INTRUDER WARNING SIGNAL, MIGHTY GALVATRON.
OBVIOUSLY, IDIOT. SO GET OUTSIDE AND FIND OUT WHO OR WHAT!
OH, YES, REAL BIG TROUBLE.

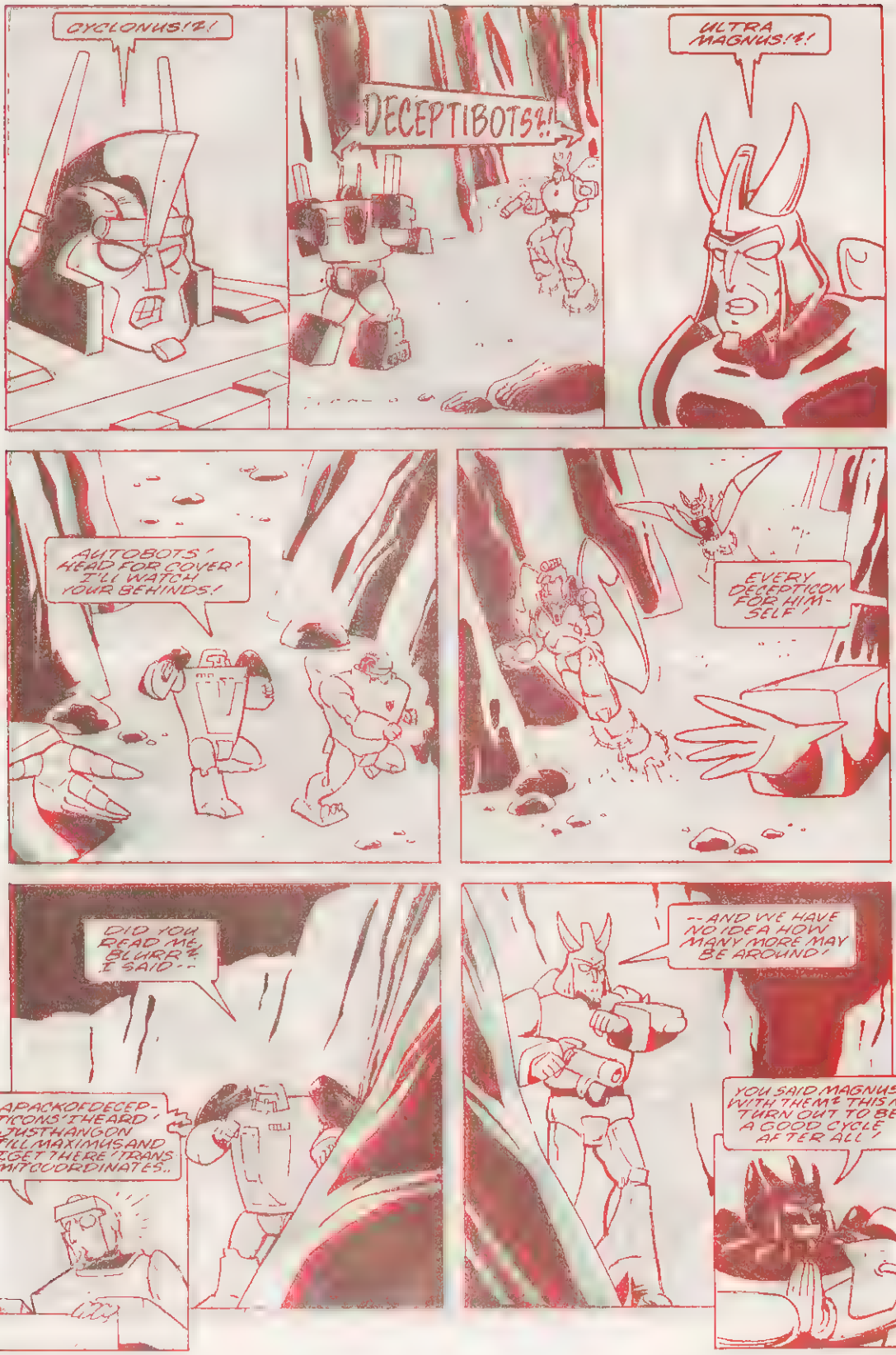
YEAH, REAL BIG, HUGE TROUBLE!
I'M OUTTA HERE!
K-ZAPP
ZAPP
BE-OWW
K-ZZAT
ZAPP
NEXT TIME MAGNUS SENDS ME OUT, I'M NEGOTIATING FOR SOME SERIOUS ARMAMENTS!

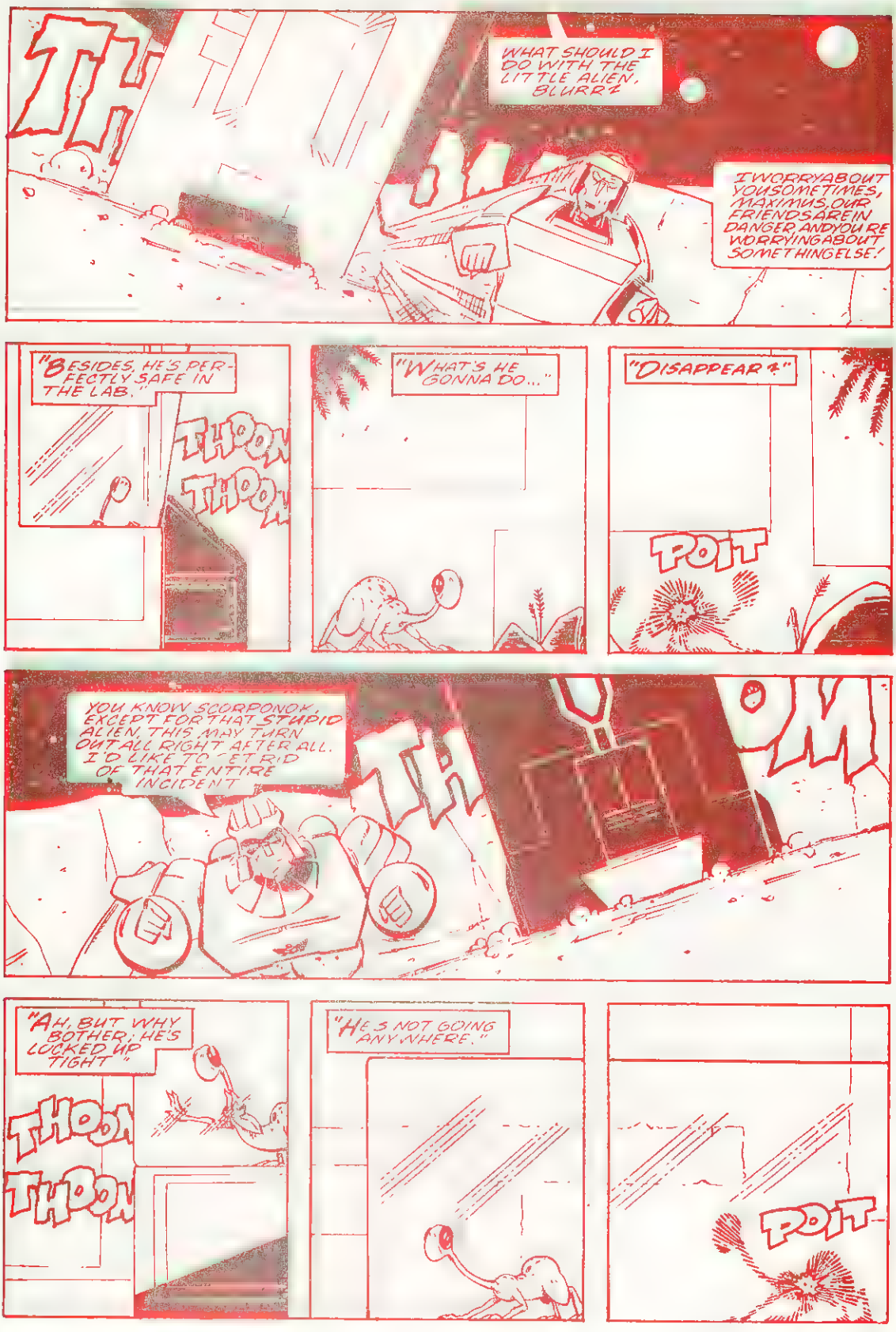
METHINKS MY COVER IS BLOWN!
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE CALLED GALVATRON FIRST.
FIGURES. NEVER A DECEPTICON AROUND WHEN YOU NEED ONE!
K-ZAPP
ZAPP
BE-OWW
K-ZZAT
ZAPP


I'M DEAD THAT'S IT I KNOW IT THEY CATCH ME, I'M DEAD
I DON'T STAND A CHANCE. HE COULD HAVE SENT LIGHT-SPEED OR BLURR THEY'RE TWICE AS FAST AS ME...
I HAD TO PLAY THE PART OF THE STUPID, I'D FOLLOW ANY-ONE'S ORDERS TO GET OUT OF ANY REAL WORK. LOOK WHERE IT GETS ME!
NEXT TIME, I GET A BACK UP... IF THERE IS A NEXT TIME. YOU KNOW, I WONDER IF ALL TRANSFORMERS BEING CHASED HAVE THESE SAME STUPID THOUGHTS?

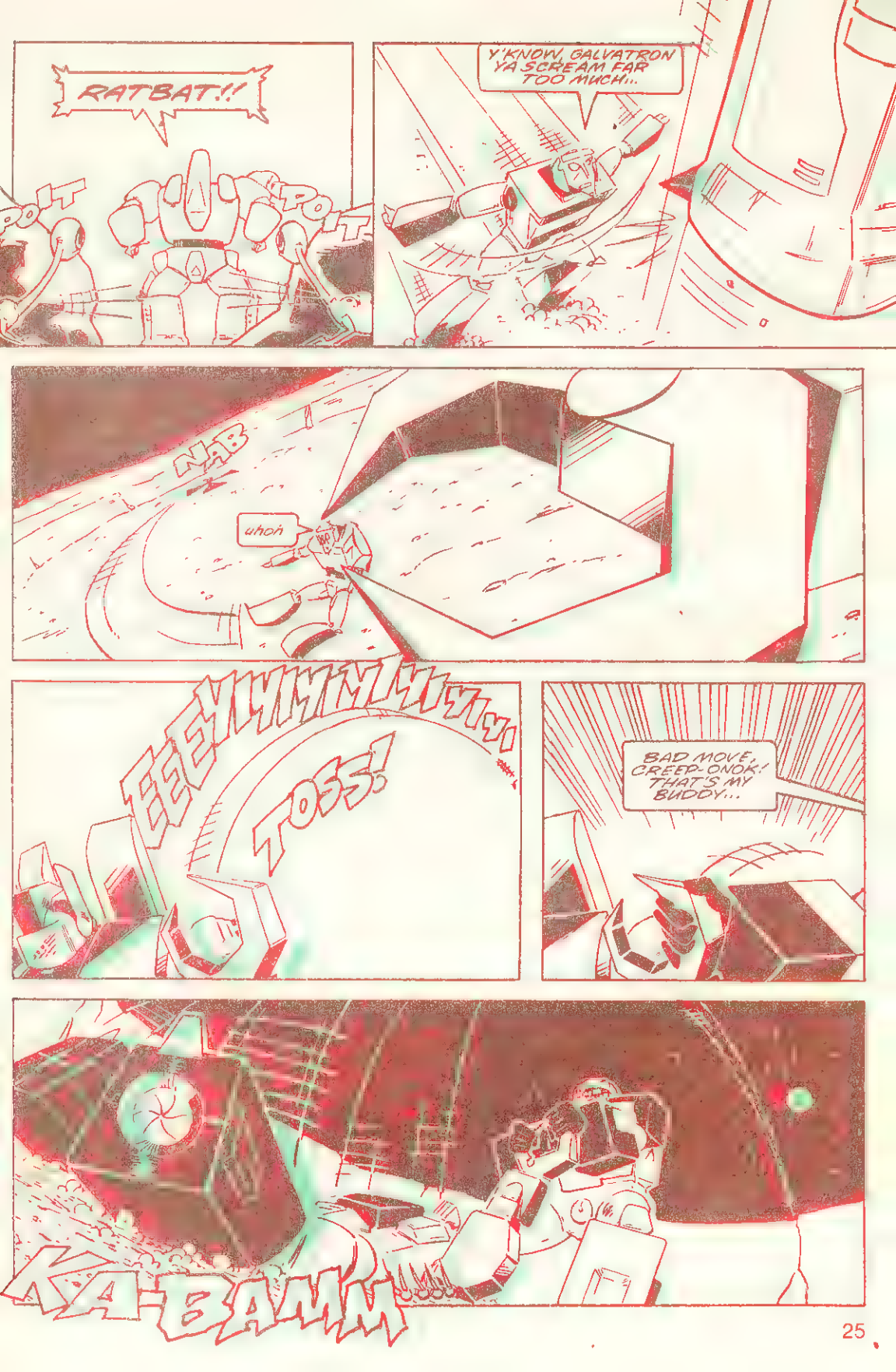
SCREECH!?!
RATBAT!?!


SEARCHLIGHT!?!
MAGNUS!?!


CYCLONUS!?!
DECEPTIBOTS?!
ULTRA MAGNUS!?!
AUTOBOTS! HEAD FOR COVER! I'LL WATCH YOUR BEHINDS!
EVERY DECEPTICON FOR HIMSELF!
DID YOU READ ME, BLURR? I SAID--
APACKOFDECEPTICONS! HEARD! JUSTHANGON TILL MAXIMUS AND IGET THERE! TRANSMITCOORDINATES..
--AND WE HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY MORE MAY BE AROUND!
YOU SAID MAGNUS IS WITH THEM? THIS MAY TURN OUT TO BE A GOOD CYCLE AFTER ALL!

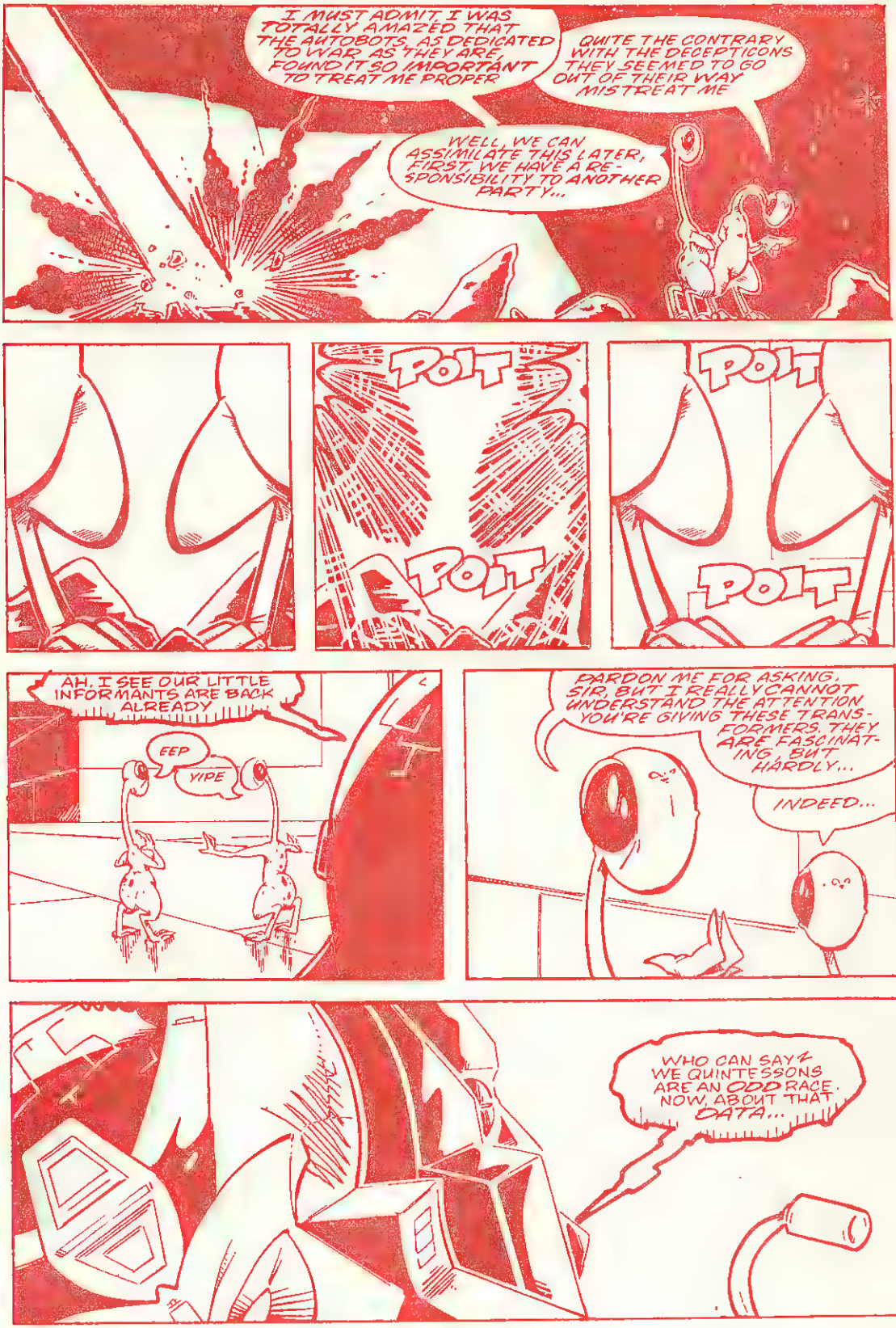

TH
WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THE LITTLE ALIEN, BLURR?
I WORRY ABOUT YOU SOMETIMES, MAXIMUS. OUR FRIENDS ARE IN DANGER AND YOU'RE WORRYING ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE!
"BESIDES, HE'S PERFECTLY SAFE IN THE LAB."
THOOM THOOM
"WHAT'S HE GONNA DO..."
"DISAPPEAR?"
POIT
YOU KNOW SCORPONOK, EXCEPT FOR THAT STUPID ALIEN, THIS MAY TURN OUT ALL RIGHT AFTER ALL. I'D LIKE TO GET RID OF THAT ENTIRE INCIDENT
TH
OM
"AH, BUT WHY BOTHER; HE'S LOCKED UP TIGHT."
THOOM THOOM
"HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE."
POIT

BEEZOW!
GIVE IT UP, CYCLONUS! YOU KNOW YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE!
KRAKA-THOOM!
OH MY, I DID SO ENJOY THAT
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS. C'MERE, YOU RODENT!
YANK
SWIM


RATBAT!!
Y'KNOW, GALVATRON YA SCREAM FAR TOO MUCH!..
NAB
whoh
EEEYHHHHHHYY!
TOSS!
BAD MOVE, CREEP-ONOK! THAT'S MY BUDDY...
KA-BAMM

SO. THOSE ARE THE TRANS-FORMERS INTERESTING
INDEED. I MUST ADMIT, I AM FAR FROM SURPRISED TO SEE THIS EN-COUNTER END IN BATTLE
IT SEEMS TO BE THE WAY OF THEIR RACE. GOOD THING OUR EMPLOYERS SUPPLIED US WITH TELEPORTERS, OR WE'D BE RIGHT IN THERE TOO

I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER WHAT OUR EMPLOYERS HAD IN MIND BY HAVING US RAID THE TRANS-FORMERS' MEMORY BANKS. I CAN UNDERSTAND CHOOSING OUR RACE. WE ARE, AFTER ALL, THE MOST KNOWLEDGABLE IN THE GALAXY...
ALSO THE MOST CURIOUS. WE HAVE BEEN IN-TRIGUED BY THIS RACE FOR SOME TIME, AND THIS WAS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY


I MUST ADMIT, I WAS TOTALLY AMAZED THAT THE AUTOBOTS, AS DEDICATED TO WAR AS THEY ARE, FOUND IT SO IMPORTANT TO TREAT ME PROPER
QUITE THE CONTRARY WITH THE DECEPTICONS THEY SEEMED TO GO OUT OF THEIR WAY MISTREAT ME
WELL, WE CAN ASSIMILATE THIS LATER. FIRST, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ANOTHER PARTY...
POIT
POIT
POIT
POIT
AH, I SEE OUR LITTLE INFORMANTS ARE BACK ALREADY
EEP
YIPE
PARDON ME FOR ASKING, SIR, BUT I REALLY CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE ATTENTION YOU'RE GIVING THESE TRANSFORMERS. THEY ARE FASCINATING, BUT HARDLY...
INDEED...
WHO CAN SAY WE QUINTESSONS ARE AN ODD RACE. NOW, ABOUT THAT DATA...

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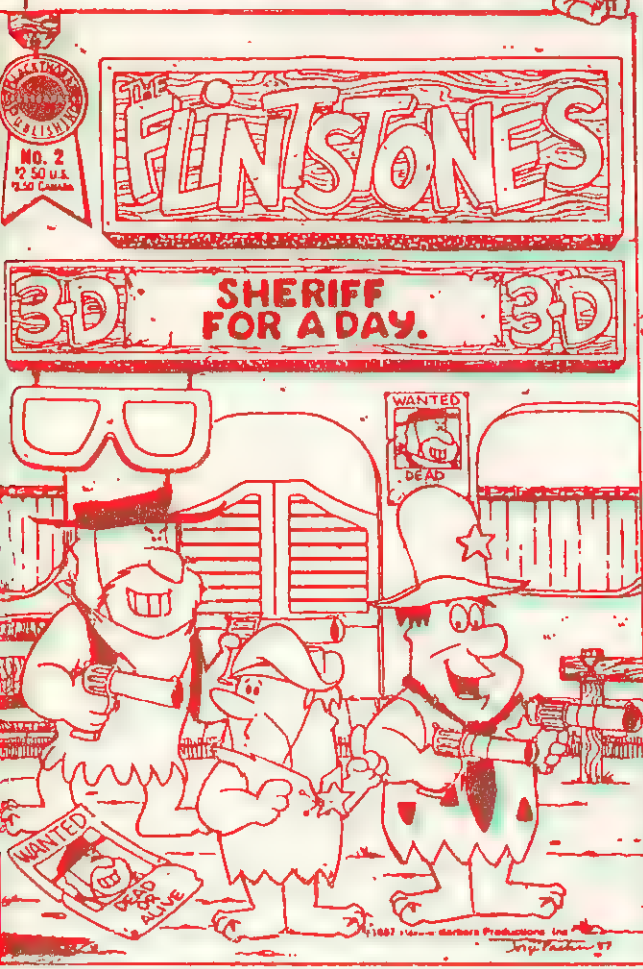
Art by
JORGE PACHECO



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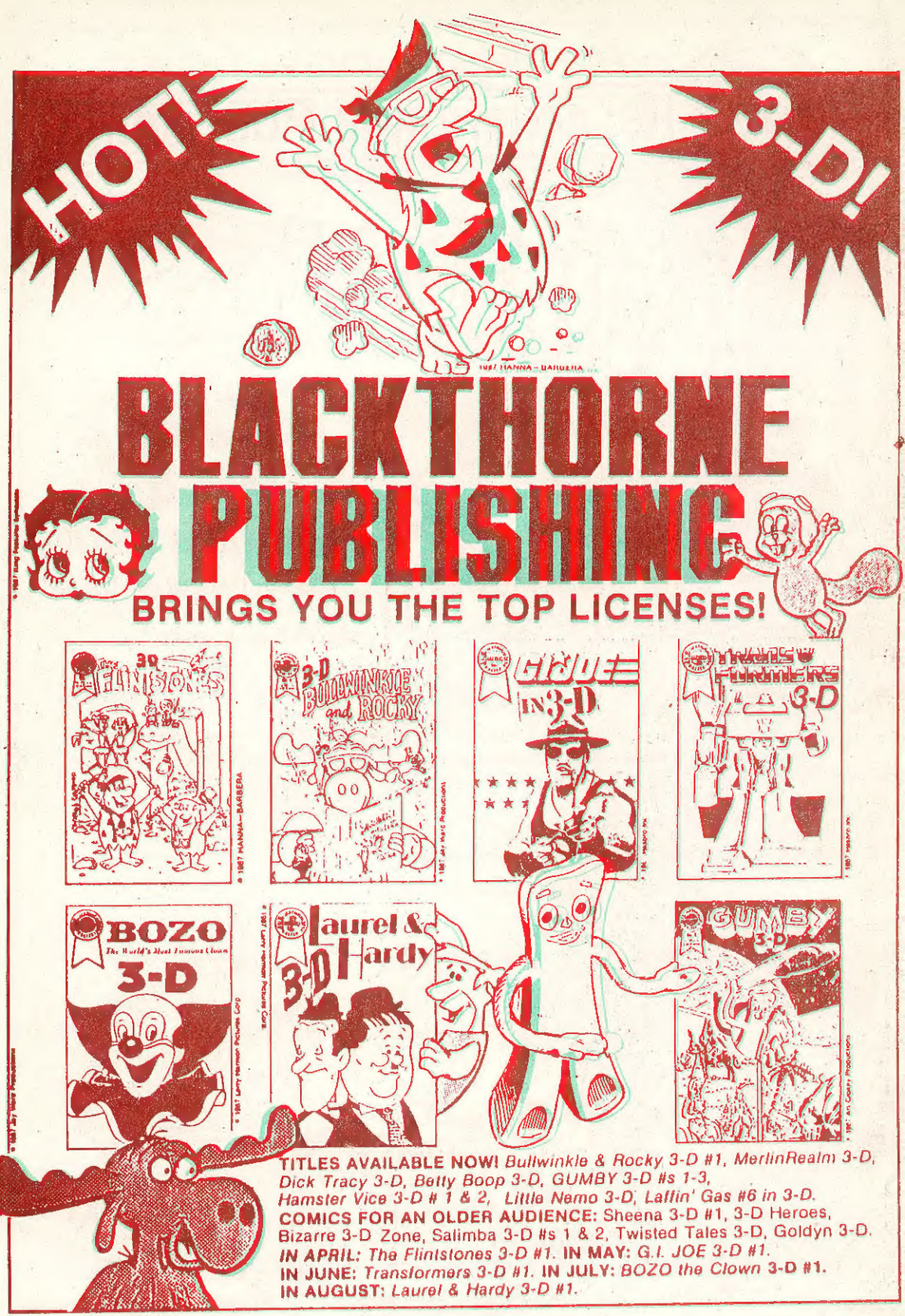
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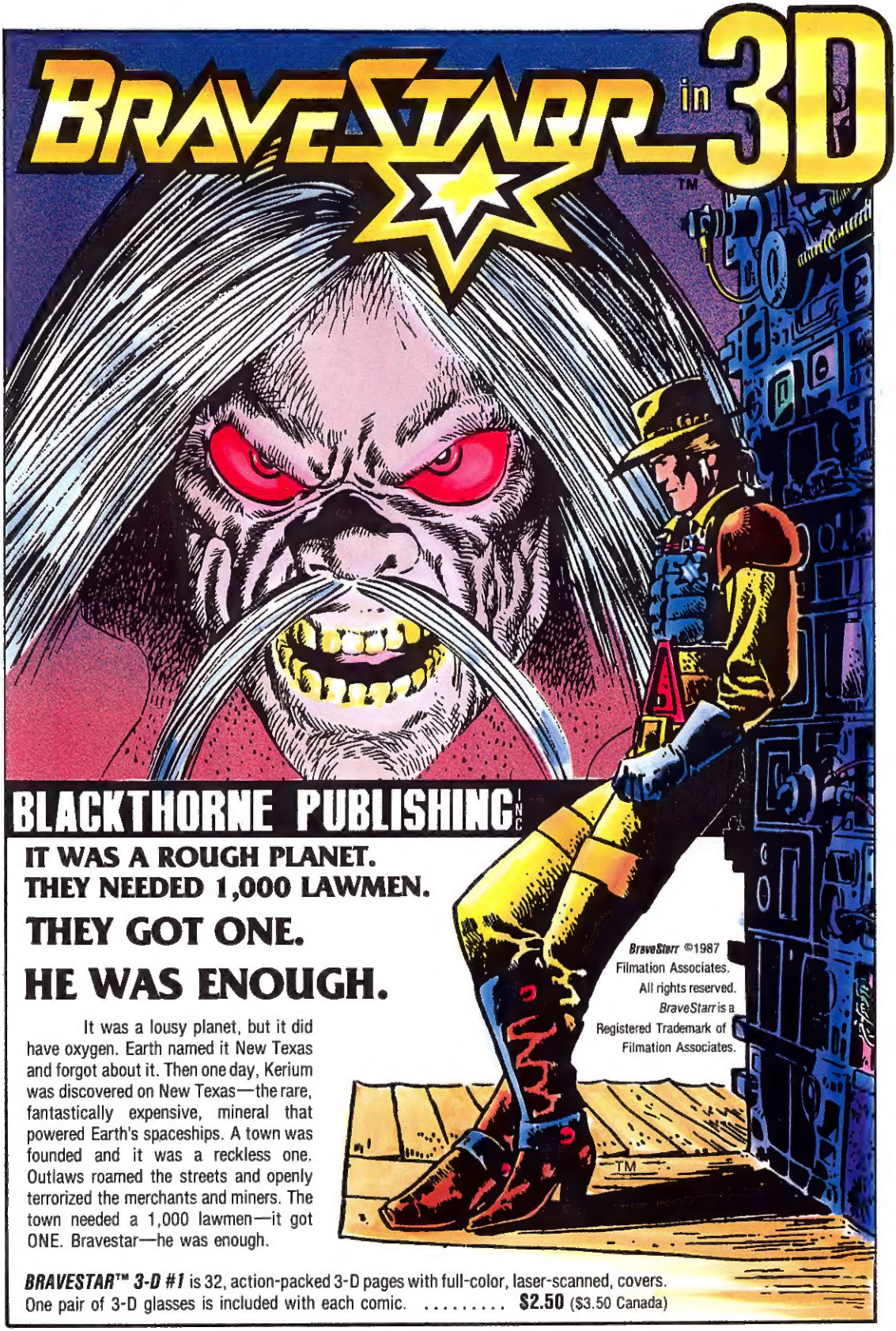
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